Opportunities for Civic Engagement: A Study in Five Secondary Social Studies Classes

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ABSTRACT

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I investigate stakeholder experiences in five New York City secondary classes associated with the low end of the civic opportunity gap. Classroom stakeholders are students, teachers, and college mentors participating in the Generation Citizen program. Generation Citizen is a push-in program meant to promote civic engagement opportunities in middle and high schools associated with the civic opportunity gap. The civic opportunity gap refers to observations that opportunities for civic engagement differ based on racial and socioeconomic markers.

A conceptual framework based on situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) guides data collection and analysis. The framework draws attention to the experiences of individuals and groups in specific contexts, called communities of practice. Successful learning in a community of practice begins with legitimate peripheral participation, a process similar to apprenticeship. Situated learning theory considers the ways that people engage with each other around important issues, imagine realities in other communities, and try to align their efforts with existing processes.

I present data collected through observations of classroom interactions and interviews with students, teachers, and program mentors. I find that legitimate peripheral participation required classroom stakeholders to engage the root causes of their chosen issues and put their knowledge into practice through actions aligned with the locus of their issue. This finding emerged through three themes, which address the role of classroom pedagogies in supporting or complicating the process of legitimate peripheral participation. Themes allow a discussion of the role that classroom interactions play in framing civic engagement experiences. Opportunities for

civic engagement in school can positively address the problems of civic gaps when youth can name and enact legitimate efforts on their own terms.

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DEDICATION

Kat, Dora-Due, Alexander: I love you.

I. INTRODUCTION

The study reported in this dissertation took place in five 12th grade Participation in Government classes in three New York City schools. During the fall of 2012 these classes partnered with the Generation Citizen (GC) non-profit organization. GC offers a curriculum based around a twice-weekly push-in program designed to provide opportunities for high school students to identify and take action on issues that matter to them. GC is one of many such nonprofits seeking to promote civic engagement among some of America's civically marginalized youth.

In this paper, I use the term *civically marginalized* to refer to youth who share demographic qualities associated with low civic engagement: low family income (Levinson, 2012), non-white ethnicity (Foster-Bey, 2008), and/or low education attainment, specifically non-college attendance (Malin, 2011). Research is clear that these students are less likely to experience effective civic engagement opportunities during school (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008), and are less likely to demonstrate civic engagement as adults; they are and become civically marginalized. These students also represent an important and growing proportion of the United States population (Jacobsen, Frankenberg, & Lenhoff, 2012). White, middle and upper class, college-educated citizens are civically engaged at higher rates that those who are non-white, poorer, or non-college attending. Additional data behind these findings is explored in chapter two. Researchers have linked uneven adult civic engagement with a gap in opportunities for civic engagement during k-12 schooling.

I report findings from a qualitative investigation of civically marginalized students and their teachers during the fall 2012 semester, when they participated in the GC curriculum program meant to promote civic engagement. This study provides a close examination of the experiences of students and teachers as they engage issues that matter to them. Classroom

observations and interviews with students, teachers, and GC 'democracy coaches' enable a more complete understanding of the mechanisms at work during the experiences and how those impact ideas about civic engagement, including plans for future engagement. I suggest ways that educators can better tailor classroom experiences to help this population clarify, express, and act on their interests in effective ways. To ground this work, I begin with an examination of the problem posed by uneven civic engagement in the classroom and society, often described as "gaps" in American civic life.

Statement of the Problem

There is a civic engagement gap in the United States (see Levinson, 2010). Uneven civic engagement challenges the idealized American democracy (Avery, 2010) in which all citizens can participate in and influence political and public matters (Hart, Richardson, & Wilkenfeld, 2011). There is an ongoing imbalance in measurable civic engagement such as "rates of voting, government contact, political discussion in the home, boycotts, and even protest participation (among many others)" (Levinson, 2010, p. 334). In this paper I adopt Ehrlich's (2000) definition of civic engagement as "working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference" (p. vi).

Concern over youth engagement is nothing new. As Galtson (2005) notes, youth have always been described as less engaged than their parents or grandparents. But, simply because the trend has always been present does not make the problem less significant. Indeed, in a review of the value of civic education, the Carnegie Corporation's *Civic Mission of the Schools* (2010) finds that "increasing numbers of Americans have disengaged from civic and political institutions" (p. 4). Secondary students are an important population for this education;

approaching 18 years, they are "in the process of becoming adult citizens" (Niemi & Junn, 1998). They are also making choices regarding their civic roles that can last a lifetime (Levine, 2007; Kahne & Middaugh, 2010). When they do not receive adequate preparation for their upcoming roles as full United States citizens, they may become citizens who are neither inclined to be civically or politically active, nor cognizant of how to use their citizenship to create changes in their communities (Carnegie Corporation of New York & CIRCLE, 2003).

Most measures of the engagement of American youth—voting, volunteering, giving to charities—demonstrated decline through the mid-2000s (Carnegie Corporation of NY and CIRCLE, 2003; Hess, 2008). Despite increases in youth voter turnout in the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections, Levine (2013) finds "few reasons to be confident that youth turnout will remain high" (p. 15) without substantial effort. He concludes that such effort must include formal civics education. I will briefly review other key data supporting Levine's concerns about youth civic engagement.

Volunteering is a more direct and active form of engagement commonly believed more attractive to today's youth. A review of youth volunteering patterns between 2002-2009 found conclusive evidence that youth volunteering steadily declined from a 2005 peak of 33%. In part the authors blame the lack of "federal- and state-level policies that allow for systematic integration of service into education" (Kirby, Kawashima-Ginsberg, & Godsay, 2011, p. 1). Those findings are based on the most recent nation-wide data on youth volunteering, collected through the 2009 United States Census Current Population Survey.

The Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal initiative, collects more frequent data through the Volunteer Supplement and the Civic Supplement. Those surveys specifically target measures like rates of volunteering and group participation. The monthly

surveys are sent to approximately 60,000 homes across the United States (see Corporation for National and Community Service, 2014). The most recent available data comes from 2013 (see Tables 1-1 and 1-2, below). Available data suggests that national volunteerism has held relatively steady, with approximately 25% of total respondents reporting volunteer activity (25.3% in 2013). Table 1-1 suggests those rates are slightly higher for youth aged 16-19, perhaps because of curricular service requirements; note that the rates for youth aged 20-24 is the lowest of respondent groups. Those are the youth just out of formal compulsory education. And though 2008 data suggests opportunities to engage in school-based service opportunities rose throughout the United States (from 83 to 86 percent in high schools), "schools in low-income areas […] were 26 percent less likely to have opportunities for service learning" (Levine & Flanagan, 2010, p. 167).

The 2013 data sets also allow basic comparisons between large cities, though some variables such as volunteer rates by race or national origin are incomplete. Table 1-2 includes comparisons of volunteering rates between New York City and Chicago, Illinois. This dissertation study is situated in New York City; Chicago data are included as a large, diverse, urban comparison.

Table 1-1

Volunteer Rates by Age Group (3-Year Pooled)

	16-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
National	26.7%	19.0%	22.8%	31.3%	29.4%	27.2%	27.1%	20.4%

Table 1-2

Overall Volunteer Rate in Chicago, IL and New York City by Year, 2004-2013

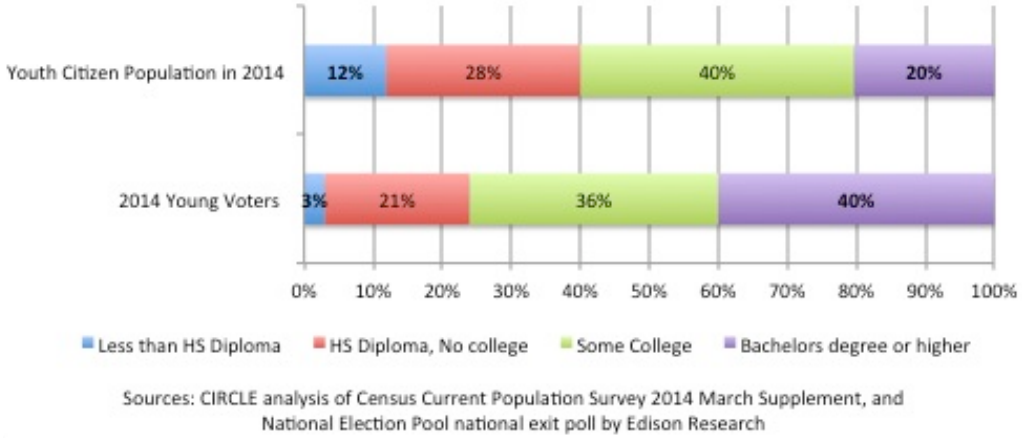
City	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Chicago, IL	27.3%	28.7%	26.2%	22.1%	22.8%	26.9%	25.5%	24.7%	26.4%	26.5%
New York City	19.3%	20.0%	16.7%	14.7%	16.6%	16.4%	18.5%	18.1%	18.4%	16.7%
Difference	71.4%	69.7%	69.7%	66.5%	72.8%	60.9%	72.5%	73.3%	69.7%	63%

It is important to note that the civic engagement gaps are not restricted to generational differences in civic engagement. The most pernicious aspects of the gap relate to differences between different education, racial, and income groups of the same generation. These differences point to unequal opportunities during formal schooling.

There is a strong correlation between volunteering and level of education. The Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2014) reports that, for respondents aged 25 and older, "39.8 percent of college graduates volunteered, compared with 27.7 percent of persons with some college or an associate's degree, 16.7 percent of high school graduates, and 9.0 percent of those with less than a high school diploma."

A report from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE, 2014) extends the analysis to voting patterns. This data supports claims that education is positively linked to important markers of civic engagement such as voting (see Malin, 2011). Analysis of data from the 2014 midterm elections shows that although college graduates comprised 20% of the population age 18-29, they accounted for 40% of voters from that age group in 2014. Figure 1-1, below, includes similar information for other educational groups. Youth with less than a high school diploma account for 12% of the population age 18-29 but only 3% of 2014 voters.

Figure 1-1
Young Citizens and Young Voters in 2014 by Educational Experience (18-29)



Sources: CIRCLE analysis of Census Current Population Survey 2014 March Supplement, and National Election Pool national exit poll by Edison Research

National rates also support the research consensus that non-White populations volunteer at lower rates. The Corporation for National and Community Service (2014) shows a significant gap between the volunteer rates of people from different racial groups (see Table 1-3). The Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2014) reports greater differences. Their report states "whites continued to volunteer at a higher rate (27.1 percent) than did blacks (18.5 percent), Asians (19.0 percent), and Hispanics (15.5 percent)."

Table 1-3
Volunteer Rates by Race and National Origin (3-Year Pooled)

	White	Black	Native Am / Alaskan	Asian	Hawaiian / Pacific Is.	More than one RNO
National	27.7%	20.0%	18.7%	19.5%	24.5%	28.7%

Flanagan (2009) notes that marginalized youth are rarely the targets of large-scale survey research, and that resulting data likely fails to investigate or capture real rates of civic engagement and volunteering among these populations. In particular, she highlights that marginalized youth often experience different social frustrations (p. 295) expressed as anger for social change rather than more traditional forms of volunteering. These same youth live in

communities with higher proportions of children to adults, limiting youth access to adults who are engaged in volunteer work.

Even the landmark study from Youniss and Yates (1997) of black youth's emerging social responsibility through participation in community service at a Catholic high school in Washington, DC excludes racial and SES breakdowns. The authors review patterns in national youth volunteering and community service participation, but do not offer breakdowns of either ethnicity or SES.

The lack of such clear data has, perhaps, led to other creative measures. For example, Kinloch (2008) goes to great lengths detailing the legitimacy of black youth's "alternate" forms of engagement, such as creating digital stories about their community. Flanagan (2009) considers examples such as youth militancy during anti-apartheid movements in South Africa, protests against transnational groups such as the G8, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee during the American Civil Rights movement.

Noguera, Cammarota, and Ginwright (2008) further observe that most data collection efforts treat youth as "pre-social" and inherently unable to engage in meaningful civic actions such as volunteering or organizing. This belief persists in part because of the reliance on traditional engagement measures such as those valued by the Corporation for National and Community Service. The authors' edited work detailing the engagement of marginalized youth exists specifically because marginalized youth do not engage in traditional engagement. Other works provide additional evidence of the gaps in civic engagement and opportunities for engagement based in ethnicity and SES.

In a review of research on volunteering, Wilson (2012) claims that "the inclusion of racial identifiers is routine in surveys of the U.S. population" (p. 9), but he is unable to find

breakdowns of data from national or large urban areas of the volunteering rates of 16-18 year olds by SES or ethnicity. There is ample data comparing ethnicities, SES, or age groups, but not ethnicity or SES within age groups. Convinced that such gaps within age groups do exist, Wilson states:

> Young adults who spent their childhood in poverty were indeed less likely to volunteer […] a disadvantaged childhood had deleterious effects on life chances (e.g., dropping out of school or unwed childbearing) which in turn lowered the chances of volunteering in adulthood (p. 13).

As support, Wilson cites Brown and Lichter (2006), who considered the impacts of disadvantaged childhoods on later volunteering. Their study uses multiple waves of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, culminating in 2002. The authors note that the lack of longitudinal studies obfuscate efforts to understand the impact of childhood experiences on adult behaviors, particularly those labeled as *prosocial* (e.g., volunteering or organizing with others) that civics researchers would call civic engagement. They conclude that, among other factors, "Young adults who spent the majority of their early childhood in poverty were less likely to volunteer compared with those young adults who were not economically poor during childhood (19% versus 33%)" (p. 161).

More recent estimations of prosocial development (the propensity of charitable giving and volunteering) using data from over 1,000 25-30 year olds find negative association between those markers and low income. That is, lower family income during childhood predicted lower charitable giving and volunteering later in life (Bandy & Ottoni-Wlhelm, 2012). Creative efforts to demonstrate the engagement gaps among youth include those from Machell, Disabato, and Kashdan (2015). The authors build on the above prosocial work to associate poverty with antisocial behaviors that often result in incarceration. Incarceration necessarily removes the

incarcerated person from many opportunities for volunteering or otherwise participating in full social life (see Flanagan & Levine, 2010).

Broad civic engagement is closely aligned with opportunities for youth to practice civic engagement in the classroom, and these opportunities seem unevenly distributed according to ethnic or socioeconomic markers. Researchers suggest that civically marginalized students are particularly unlikely to participate in and influence political and public matters (Hart, Richardson, & Wilkenfeld, 2011) through actions like voting or organizing (Bennett, 2003) in part because they receive fewer or less effective structured supports during school activities (Bennett, 2009). At least two decades of data highlights the relationship between socioeconomic status and engagement; low socioeconomic status correlates with less time available to devote in engagement efforts, an inability to donate money, and reduced propensity to vote (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995). The "strong relationship between education and civic engagement" (García Bedolla, 2012, p. 23) even extends to analyses within ethnic groups. Youth with higher real and expected education are most likely to engage in popular markers like voting regardless of their ethnicity in part because higher levels of education are more likely to provide opportunities for civic engagement (De la Garza & Jang, 2011).

Some specific civic learning opportunities have been found to increase student civic motivation, but these opportunities in particular are unevenly distributed (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). For example, white students and students in affluent classrooms are more likely to report effective practices such as studying how laws are made, having classroom debates, and participating in service activities. In comparison, low-income youth and youth of color receive a greater percentage of textbook-based instruction focused on content and strategies for standardized testing rather than civic engagement (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008).

Inequalities in civic education opportunities appear to maintain the civic and political marginalization of disadvantaged groups (Bedolla, 2012). It follows that, since marginalized youth are not prepared to vote or organize at the same rates as white or affluent citizens, they are less likely to have their interests represented in government. The accumulation of unequal opportunities in school and eventual underrepresentation in society becomes a form of formal exclusion from government (de la Garza & Jang, 2011) and generates de facto majority and minority citizens.

The American public education system is meant to provide "access to equal educational opportunity for every individual" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) regardless of discipline or content, yet there is significant inequality within the system. Boyte (2008) argues that top-down efforts, which include the recent federal initiatives No Child Left Behind Act and Race to the Top, cannot successfully address civic gaps. Such legislation focuses on academic rather than civic achievement and often encourages instruction based on preparation for standardized tests.

Schools are not the only institutions or context for youth to experience civic engagement opportunities (Shiller, 2012), but schools do reach a wide swath of the population, and are formally charged with preparing future citizens (Levine, 2007). That schools are demonstrably uneven in this regard is troubling, and closely relates to concerns about the civic engagement of adult citizens. As a teacher educator, I situate my work within conversations about these school-based civic engagement discrepancies.

In the context of schools, and related to civically marginalized youth, the civic engagement gap is in part considered an outcome of the civic opportunity gap (Levinson, 2007; Torney-Purta, Barber, & Wilkenfield, 2007). Because of variations in teacher education (Adler, 2008) or professional development (van Hover, 2008), local curriculum standards (Benninga &

Quinn, 2011), or other perceived curricular constraints (Farkas & Duffet, 2010), individual classrooms in the United States differ in the extent to which students have opportunities to practice civic engagement, but over large samples, patterns appear. Like actual engagement, classroom-based civic opportunities seem unevenly distributed according to ethnic or socioeconomic markers. Overlap between the opportunity gap and the academic achievement gap means "it is more common" for schools serving civically marginalized students "to devote their energy to continually improving test scores" (Shiller, 2012, p. 70).

Students in schools with low test scores or sub-par graduation rates find their days increasingly devoted to remedial courses in reading, math, and focused preparation for high-stakes tests. There is little evidence that such efforts are effective. The most recent NAEP data, from 2010, shows that overall civic scores for 12-grade students dropped relative to 2006 scores (Buckley, 2011). NAEP "measures the civics knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are critical to the responsibilities of citizenship in America's constitutional democracy" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Fewer than 70 percent of participating students reported studying aspects of the government in school, including the US Constitution or how a bill becomes a law. 73% of White students scoring at or above Basic and 30% scoring at or above proficient on the civics exam. By comparison, 38% of Black students scored at or above basic and only 8% scored at or above proficient. Other minority groups have similarly reduced scores (Buckley, 2011, p. 55).

The NAEP data does not in itself mean that opportunities to learn were absent for those with low scores, nor does that data allow a comparison between ethnic or income groups with respect to what students did report studying, but other researchers have undertaken to demonstrate both. For example, a landmark study from Kahne and Middaugh (2008) reported

that White students or those in affluent classrooms are twice as likely to report studying how laws are made, almost one-and-half times more likely to have classroom experience with debates, and almost twice as likely to participate in service activities compared to marginalized youth.

Levstik's (2008) review of K-12 social studies education shares two examples of reduced social studies (and, by extension, civics) instruction. Following No Child Left Behind, Indiana schools averaged 18 minutes of social studies instruction per day. Similarly, only 23% of elementary teachers surveyed in North Carolina reported including social studies instruction in their classrooms. Though these results are not broken out by ethnicity or SES, other studies (e.g., Kozol, 2005) demonstrate that increased testing disproportionately alters instruction in schools serving poor or non-White students. Returning to the data cited in Levstik (2008), this would suggest that Indiana schools serving marginalized youth likely offer fewer than 18 minutes per day, and less than ¼ of marginalized North Carolina elementary students receive social studies instruction.

In a review of the various opportunity gaps in American public education, Carter and Welner (2013) report that "access to high-quality civic learning opportunities in school" is the highest predictor of later civic engagement, but that "low-income students, Latino and African American students, and students enrolled in low academic tracks have less access to these civic learning opportunities than their peers" (p. 212). Youniss (2011) reviews some of the factors leading to the civic opportunity gap, such as school location. He notes that "some schools in which the majority of students are headed for college are likely to be located in areas that have lively political debate" (p. 99). As schools and teachers are increasingly judged by test scores, those serving marginalized youth face additional disincentives to provide those opportunities for

civic engagement. Youniss cites studies of 14-year olds across 28 countries (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001) and 10 Chicago high schools (Kahne & Sporte, 2008) as further evidence not only that opportunities like those political discussions are important, but that their uneven dispersal promote inequalities in opportunities for civic engagement. Youniss further cites evidence that "disadvantaged students were less likely than schools servicing their counterparts, to have student governments" (p. 101) that are known to promote valuable opportunities for civic engagement.

Educators and researchers agree that one important goal of formal education is developing behaviors associated with democratic citizenship. As described further in chapter two, particular classroom methods such as service learning are associated with promoting democratic behaviors during school. Much of that research stems from efforts to measure the impact of those methods in schools associated with the civic opportunity gap. Service learning and similar intentional opportunities for civic engagement are not the only ways of promoting civic engagement during school. For instance, Lenzi et al (2014) use data from 403 adolescents to show that non-classroom efforts, such as democratic school climate, can promote higher civic responsibility.

Concerned with the role of education in promoting active democratic citizenship, this study explores one effort to address the civic opportunity gap: A focused curriculum designed to help civically marginalized students identify, explore, and address a legitimate public issue that matters to them. Though the findings also relate to overall engagement, the focus remains on experiences within particular classrooms associated with the civic opportunity gap and the stakeholders in those classrooms. I now introduce the research questions guiding this study and explain my use of key terminology.

Research Questions

In this section I introduce the research questions guiding this study, in which I examine literature-based issues on potential marginalization of groups based on prevalent pedagogical practices in civics education during a program of purported civic engagement. The experience of civically marginalized students who gain access to civic engagement opportunities in school has gained greater attention in recent years (see Sherrod, Torney-Purta, and Flanagan, 2010). As described in chapter two, these studies generally seek to evaluate individual changes in civic skills, knowledge, or motivation among youth exposed to certain programmatic interventions. Not available are studies describing the experiences and beliefs of civically marginalized students *and* their teachers during civic engagement opportunities. I investigate the experiences of classroom stakeholders in five secondary social studies classes throughout a semester of participation in a program designed to promote civic engagement opportunities, led by the following questions:

- How do teachers' pedagogical practices promote or impede students' engagement in civics issues in five selected classes?
- What patterns emerge about factors influencing:
    - Civic engagement levels through interactions in the class?
    - Civic engagement actions of teachers and students on specific issues?

I approach these questions by examining person, process, and context dimensions of the three stakeholder groups in the classrooms—students, teachers, and DCs. To guide this examination, I apply a conceptual framework based on situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Situated learning theory situates all social interactions within communities of practice. Members of these communities of practice are able to demonstrate their legitimacy within those contexts through certain recognizable acts. This framework is informed by Torney-Purta, Amadeo, and Andolina, 2010, who make suggestions for operationalizing situated learning

theory to investigate civic engagement experiences. For instance, legitimacy in communities concerned with civic engagement can involve identifying appropriate actions, such as protests, to attempt addressing civic issues. As described in chapter three, classrooms are communities of practice. Understanding their operation requires investigating the experiences of all stakeholders. I further explore this framework in chapter three.

Explanation of Terminology: "Stakeholders"

I use the term stakeholders to refer to three key groups relevant to this study. First are civically marginalized youth. These are the students in the classrooms at the heart of the semester experience. Second are the classroom teachers. As gatekeepers (Thornton, 2004), "teachers are the key to what happens in classrooms" (Adler, 2008, p. 329), extending to whether civic engagement opportunities are offered in their classrooms. Third are the Generation Citizen Democracy Coaches. These are volunteer college students who assist in preparing and delivering the Generation Citizen curriculum in the participating classrooms. Situated learning focuses on communities of practice, warranting investigations of all experiences within a given community (see chapter three). Hence, I attend to the experiences of representatives from the three main groups in the classroom communities of practice.

Explanation of Terminology: "Civically marginalized youth"

In this study I use the terms "civically marginalized" and "civically marginalized youth" to refer to those youth, particularly in secondary schools, who share demographic qualities associated with the civic opportunity and engagement gaps. As mentioned, those demographic qualities include, but are not limited to, non-White ethnicity; low socioeconomic status; or lower expected or real educational attainment, specifically non-college attendance. These are statistical descriptions, and should not be read as deterministic. They are neither meant to reify the

conditions described nor "place blame" with the youth described or their schools. Schools serving poor students can and do provide quality civic education opportunities. The students in those schools are not inherently incapable of this work. But the research does demonstrate that the demographics of the civic opportunity gap are consistent over large samples.

Explanation of Terminology: "Community of practice"

A community of practice is an association between people through which they define "what constitutes competence in a given context" (Wenger, 2000, p. 229). Because all people are members of multiple communities of practice, stakeholders in this study did not consistently bound their own conversations within the classroom. Stakeholders alternately invoked three levels of community, each of which meets the criteria for Lave and Wenger's communities of practice (1991). In an effort to reduce confusion I refer to those communities by more common names: *classroom* or *class* for the classroom in which GC sessions took place, *school* for the school, and *locus of the issue* for the context in which students located their issue.

I now describe the organization of the dissertation.

Organization of the Dissertation

I organize this dissertation into six chapters. Chapter one has established the problem that I seek to address, commonly known as the civic opportunity gap. In chapter two I review current literature relevant to school-based civic engagement opportunities and the role of civic identity in supporting civic engagement. In chapter three I explain the conceptual framework used to guide data collection and analysis. Chapter four relates the specific methods of data collection and analysis, and includes narrative introductions of the curriculum, research sites, and participants. I present the major finding from this study in chapter five. I conclude the study in chapter six, with a discussion of this study's implications and suggestions for further research.

Chapter Summary

Civic engagement in American society is demonstrably uneven. White, wealthier, more educated citizens tend to engage at higher rates and with greater impact than non-White, poorer, or less educated citizens. This is in part a result of the uneven distribution of opportunities for students to practice civic engagement. Students who are poor, members of minority groups, or are statistically unlikely to attend college tend to have fewer and less beneficial civic engagement opportunities in school. Educational inequalities persist into adulthood, meaning that youth from these populations are less likely to engage in, or have their interests represented, in broad society. This is a cyclical process.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines the scholarly research of efforts to promote civic engagement, particularly in students associated with the civic gaps introduced in chapter one. As an educator my primary interest is in the role that schools and schooling can play in addressing the civic engagement gap. This situates my work in the civic opportunity gap, which concerns the opportunities that youth are provided in schools to practice civic engagement. Literature on the civic opportunity gap closely links the uneven provision of these opportunities with the same inequalities that mark the civic engagement gap.

Research into classroom-level civic engagement has increased since the National Assessment of Educational Progress of 1998 and the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study of 1999. Those assessments reignited concerns about K-12 civics education in the United States. The resulting research using those and other data eventually stimulated Sherrod, Torney-Purta, and Flanagan's (2010) claim that "the field of youth engagement has come of age" (p. 1).

My own research on this topic began with a search of the ProQuest index (ProQuest LLC, 2014). A basic Boolean search for peer reviewed articles containing the words "civic engagement AND education" yielded 20,706 returns dating from 1825 and covering subjects including politics, democracy, higher education, citizenship, history, and social studies education.[1] These results were largely expected, as civic engagement concerns questions of politics, citizenship, and history; colleges and universities are also often sites of important civic

[1] Interestingly, at the time of writing there were 743 records published prior to 1990. There are 19,963 records from 1990-2013, with 17,980 of those after 1999. This could be the result of technology or more standardized terminology, but also suggests increased research interest. Craig (2014) provides additional quantitative evidence of this increased interest. In a review of recent work in political science, he finds that approximately ten percent of all articles regarding political science teaching and learning from 1997-2012 specifically concerned civic engagement pedagogies. Civic engagement trails only international relations and American government as the most popular topic for political science scholarship. Civic engagement education is a burgeoning area of research.

engagement experiences (Levine, 2014). Early studies provide relevant background regarding research development, but my main focus was research conducted since 1990, when standardized testing and a focus on quantified data were reasserted in state and federal educational efforts. That transition marked a shift in education and research (Ravitch, 2010). I will now review key databases, journals, search terms, and authors in the contemporary landscape of the field.

Relevant databases for this work include ERIC (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), J-STOR (ITHAKA, 2014), and PsychINFO (Ovid Technologies, 2014). Specific journals include *Urban Education*; *The Phi Delta Kappan*; and *Applied Developmental Science*. These three journals are excellent collections of work reporting qualitative and quantitative results through contextual studies, curriculum and pedagogy studies, and developmental theories, respectively. They also tend to offer a broadly interdisciplinary selection.

Civic gaps include elements of what some term the civic achievement gap (e.g., Levinson, 2007), civic empowerment gap (e.g., Levinson, 2010), or the civic opportunity gap (e.g., Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Literature relevant to any of these terms provides a reference point for understanding the problem of low civic participation in certain youth populations. Other key search terms included: Civic Opportunity, Civic Education, Citizenship Education, Community Involvement, Service Learning, and Educational Environment. These terms are suggested in various databases, and cast a wide net for potentially relevant returns. From these, a number of authors and their theories appear in multiple works; these form the basis for a more focused search on particular theories.

Amongst many recurring names, Joseph Kahne, Peter Levine, Meira Levinson, Susan Sporte, Judith Torney-Purta, Joel Westheimer, Miranda Yates, and James Youniss are connected in their investigations of the civic engagement of diverse urban students. These names are among

the most cited across the various databases. Their ongoing work demonstrates that efforts to understand and improve civics education are incomplete. The wealth of research on community engagement in other academic disciplines (e.g., the natural sciences; see Falk, Dierking, & Foutz, 2007) demonstrates that the topic of learning through interaction with the community—one way of thinking about civic engagement—is of widespread interest. Most of the research that was useful in this study comes from social studies education literature. When provided in schools, opportunities for civic engagement tend to come in social studies classes like government and civics. Social studies research seems behind that of other areas; despite a pressing need to better understand how education can promote active and engaged citizenship, the academic literature demonstrates an ongoing need for more research in a variety of fields including civic engagement.

Chapter Organization

This literature review involved three distinct search efforts framed by my primary research question. I organize key literature in three sections. The first section explores the goals of civic engagement and civic education generally. The second section explores literature on the civic opportunity gap. The third section explores research on opportunities for civic engagement in schools. I conclude the chapter with a synthesis of conclusions from existing research and suggestions for further research.

Ideas of Citizenship Related to Civic Engagement

In this first section of the literature review I focus on key ideas of citizenship related to civic education and associated research. First, I connect citizenship to education. Second, I review different ideas of citizenship in education. Third, I explore literature related to civic identity.

Ideas of Citizenship in Education

In this subsection I explore ideas of citizenship in education. Much of the literature on ideas of citizenship touches on political or sociological theories of how people relate to the individuals or institutions that comprise society. Citizenship concerns the rights and responsibilities of individuals within a particular political community (Leydet, 2014). There is debate about citizenship and how it is defined, particularly within diverse, increasingly interconnected liberal societies.

American public schools are generally charged with promoting democratic citizenship; however, questions about what constitutes the specific necessary knowledge and skills for democratic citizenship are not settled. Most notably described in Westheimer and Kahne (2004), goals for democratic citizenship can vary from conformist notions of following laws to more active ideas about reconstructing society. Advocating for more specifically political action, Westheimer and Kahne's seminal review of citizenship programs suggests a means for classifying student civic qualities according to a three-part taxonomy of citizenship: personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented. The authors suggest that democracies should strive for education that promotes justice-oriented citizens who will seek the greatest equity within their communities. Their framework also highlights the ongoing debate about citizenship in the United States, what it means, and what civic education should be.

Broadly, democratic citizens "are able to use their knowledge about their community, nation and world; to apply inquiry processes; and to employ skills of data collection and analysis, collaboration, decision-making, and problem-solving" (National Council for the Social Studies, 2010, p. 3). Relatively value-neutral, this goal for citizenship presumes broad content knowledge and general skills like information gathering and critical thinking, which are endorsed in all

school subjects. Aligned with this description are general civic activities that might rightly be desired of democratic citizens.

Among the most common markers of civic engagement are voting, contacting government officials, or joining boycotts and protests (Levinson, 2010). Despite cultural limitations and generally low reports of each type, these traditional forms of engagement retain a key place in American civic discourse and continue to define archetypes for active democratic citizens. Voting is the most apparent and frequently cited, as it represents perhaps the most basic expected civic action beyond following laws. Government contact retains an important space, whether via traditional forms or newer online petitions and social media outlets. The frequency with which citizens engage in boycotts or protests seems to receive less attention in schools and society, and these forms of action are often discouraged by the government (Soule & Davenport, 2009) or media (Andrews & Caren, 2010). Nevertheless, citizens and residents from all demographic groups have successfully employed such actions.

Civic engagement is one way people express their citizenship. Because "civic engagement refers to the actions that citizens take to create the kind of community and society they want to live in," the purposes of engagement relate closely with a person's view of citizenship and how society ought to be (Flanagan & Christens, 2013, p. 161). Because civic engagement and civic engagement opportunities embody citizenship, the purposes for civic engagement are diverse. People engage to promote exclusionary legislation and inclusionary legislation, to maintain the status quo or to enact change. That "programs that seek to further democracy by nurturing 'good' citizens embody a similarly broad variety of goals" (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 241) is an important point.

We know that, "programs that seek to teach and encourage citizenship education and engagement often engender different and sometimes contradictory beliefs" (Dudley & Gitelson, 2002, p. 179). For instance, certain citizenship goals might encourage a teacher to lecture on the Bill of Rights while other goals would encourage engaging students in a debate or mock lesson on ratifying the Constitution. The reasons for those pedagogical choices are frequently absent in existing research. Those reasons also relate to a particular vision or idea of citizenship, such as whether founding documents are debatable, and how citizenship education should be approached in the classroom.

Social studies educators are generally concerned with developing one or another kind of citizenship in youth (Parker, 2008). Despite certain hierarchical orderings of citizenship (e.g., Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), no universal vision of citizenship in a democratic society such as the United States exists (Hahn, 1998; 2010a). We can think of citizenship in the United States in part as an expression of some American identity. People disagree about what an American civic identity ought to be. Hence, differences in what people think a citizen is can relate to differences in what they think a citizen ought to do (Fowler, 2011).

The history of social studies education (the collection of school subjects most closely aligned with civic education) in the United States is marked by a series of battles regarding the meaning of citizenship and, by extension, the purposes of social studies education (Evans, 2004). In the 1990s, such discord prevented legislators from approving a set of national social studies content standards. More recently, the Texas State School Board passed contentious revisions to the state's history standards (Rubin, 2012). New Common Core State Standards omit social studies content descriptions in favor of literacy and math skills. In a curriculum narrowed by concern over test scores, basic patriotism and employable skills take precedence (Cuban, 2004).

The College, Career, and Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards (C3) addresses these gaps and provides guidance for social studies educators (National Council for the Social Studies, 2014). The C3 standards encourage informed action through authentic inquiry (Levinson & Levine, 2013). This is an important development for supporting classroom-based opportunities for civic engagement. The document prioritizes civic engagement, describing civic engagement as "both a means of learning and applying social studies knowledge" through such actions as "making independent and collaborative decisions within the classroom, to starting and leading student organizations within schools, to conducting community-based research and presenting findings to external stakeholders" (National Council for the Social Studies, 2014, p. 59). With concern for "the next generation" there is a clear call in this document for what Dalton (2009) has called engaged citizenship.

Dalton reviewed a series of representative generational survey data in the United States that asked questions about four categories of citizenship norms: participation, autonomy, social order, and solidarity. Responses tended to cluster into two groups: duty-based and engaged citizenship. I review these groups in turn.

Duty-based citizens tend to treat democratic citizenship as a collection of duties one holds towards the society or nation. They value acts such as voting and upholding the social order through acts such as reporting crimes or obeying laws. Dalton's description of duty-based citizenship is similar to that contained in Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) personally responsible citizen, and the markers Levinson (2010) and others often use when introducing the civic engagement gap. Duty-based or personally responsible citizens trust in their ability to influence government through traditional practices of voting or directly contacting elected officials. Duty-

based citizens expect to exert influence over governmental decisions by using the social capital traditionally associated with strong democracies (Putnam, 1995).

Civic interventions may engage students in learning experiences with the goal of promoting duty-based citizenship. A form of political socialization (Engle & Ochoa, 1988), this focuses on increasing student civic knowledge (Dudley & Gitelson, 2002) and skills, particularly understanding political processes and leadership roles (Long & Long, 1974). Duty-based citizenship is most accessible to legal citizens, specifically those who see their interests represented in government or civic decisions. While detractors suggest this marginalizes immigrant and minority groups, proponents may suggest a more relational view that stresses the commonalities among legal citizens within a country (Junn, 2004). This both establishes citizenship as an expression of a more homogeneous view of American civic identity and prioritizes knowledge of traditional civic and political systems. In this model knowledge of those systems should bring individuals confidence that they can successfully navigate the systems and make their voices heard.

Educational administrators seem to share this prioritization of civic knowledge, though perhaps for more utilitarian reasons such as test scores. Reporting results from a 2009 survey of 1,020 top-level school administrators (e.g., school board members, superintendents) Hess and Meeks (2011) find “a dramatic increase in the importance that board members accord to academic achievement” (p. 17), particularly achievement in measures of areas like civic knowledge. The emphasis placed on civic knowledge also frames reports on declining youth proficiency on measures such as the National Assessment of Education Progress (Buckley, 2011) that may help drive public discussions and educational decisions. With the increase in content-based accountability measures, education continues to be treated as “the gateway to professional

and personal development" (Lautzenheiser, Kelly, & Miller, 2011, p. 8). The emphasis on college and career readiness can prioritize a transactional citizenship based on such traits as "being timely and hardworking" (p. 8) that have a close relationship to duty-based citizenship. These systems are based on goals for ordered and responsible life and citizenship. Framed positively, this is preparation for working effectively in the system. Framed critically, this denies realities of inequality and actual patterns of engagement. In regards to school-based opportunities for civic engagement this can limit the issues open for discussion, sources used in their investigation, or actions perceived as acceptable to address issues.

Like administrators and the general public, classroom teachers seem concerned by the "state of civics education" (Feldmann, 2007, p. 5), particularly a lack of civic knowledge and participation in their students. Echoing the hope that curricula represent the interests of the general public (Gutmann, 1999), "citizens and teachers often have similar beliefs about what topics and concepts are most essential to teach about citizenship" (Lautzenheiser et al, 2011, p. 1). The general citizenry prefers educators to stress facts and dates rather than active engagement like service learning. This is a duty-based approach to citizen development. The primary goal for more expansive views of citizenship is a corps of citizens capable of influencing their communities through myriad actions (Hart, Richardson, & Wilkenfeld, 2011) that may include, but are not limited to, traditional political actions like voting.

In comparison with duty-based citizenship, engaged citizenship prioritizes "non-electoral activities such as buying products for political reasons and being active in civil society groups" (Dalton, 2009, p. 28). Engaged citizens take action individually and in groups, rather than necessarily working through elected officials or large associations. This is not to suggest that engaged citizens do not vote or contact politicians, simply that their default form of engagement

may be to address needs themselves. In addition to being "patriotic, loyal, and obedient, […this] good citizen is also a critic of the state, one who is able and willing to participate in its improvement" (Engle & Ochoa, 1988, p. 3). Engaged citizens have a goal of impacting their communities through their own efforts rather than with a ballot or mailbox. Engaged citizens may identify as majority or minority members, but most are young. They may form their attitudes and goals for engagement because of new organizing opportunities via expanding technology (Dalton, 2009) or because of generational dissatisfaction with American politics (Levine, 2007). Levine (2014) summarizes: "Americans know they are being manipulated, and they resent it," (p. 22). Instead of working through politicians and systems perceived as manipulative, Americans are increasingly turning to direct action.

Recent studies suggest that American youth increasingly prefer engaged citizenship through community service volunteering and protest participation; that is, engaged citizenship is growing as a percent of total youth engagement. Levine (2011) reviewed trends in American participation since at least 1960. Among other findings, he notes resurgence in "the nation's service infrastructure" (p. 16). The networks exist and may be growing, but still represent a minority of the overall population; Levine estimates about one million individual citizens, or approximately one-third of one percent, are active in the renewal. Despite low numbers, the networks are a point of hope because they counter a trend in American society away from civic engagement, particularly for students who lack explicit experience with engagement or who are members of minority and marginalized groups. Levine (2011) explicitly cites the growing numbers of government service programs such as AmeriCorps and the Bonner Scholars as evidence of the interest that American youth have in service.

Checkoway elaborates on the attraction engaged citizenship holds for youth, noting it "is about the power of young people as a group that is usually underrepresented in the political process" (2011, p. 341). This plays on ideas that youth tend to see themselves as outside the traditional system. Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) are among those who more narrowly describe benefits and attractions for civically marginalized youth who have experiences with engaged citizenship. In a review of two community-based civic engagement organizations the authors find that engaged citizenship experiences promote a critical civic praxis that enables and supports such youth's efforts for social justice.

Of course, not all marginalized youth have the same interests. Kawashima-Ginsberg and Kirby (2009) report a CIRCLE review of youth volunteering patterns that shows youth of immigrant origin (themselves or one or more parents born outside the United States) do volunteer, but at reduced rates compared with youth of non-immigrant origin. Callahan and Obenchain (2012) suggest that, at least with regards to the Latino immigrant youth in their study, youth might distinguish between "civic (e.g., volunteering through an organized club) and political (e.g., registering to vote, working on a campaign, discussing politics) engagement" (p. 22). This can put them at odds with social studies curricula that tend to stress political socialization and those political forms of engagement that Dalton associates with duty-based citizenship.

Proponents of engaged citizenship prefer to view youth as differently engaged rather than disengaged. They seek interventions that allow youth to practice taking action in their schools and communities.[2] Interventions are thus based on a belief that youth—like adults—are

[2] "Allow" is an important term. The presumption is that youth are already or are desirous of becoming engaged but have no opportunities to do so in ways established institutions such as schools recognize as legitimate. Interventions

inherently interested in engaging to improve their communities. These interventions frequently appear as project- or issues-based curricula such as those described later.

Engaged citizenship generally exists in tension with duty-based citizenship. Duty-based citizens lament declines in traditional associations and acts like voting. Engaged citizens might counter that faith in associations or political institutions as solutions is often misplaced. In this regard, the goals of the engaged citizen may overlap with those of the justice-oriented citizen, who takes a proactive role towards investigating and addressing the causes of issues rather than alleviating symptoms (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). This citizen might suggest it is not in the best interests of institutions and elected officials to address causes or that institutions and elected officials are the causes of such problems.

Because engaged citizenship prioritizes non-electoral engagement and action, civic knowledge may be treated as a means to an end rather than a goal in its own right. Interventions that seek to instill engaged citizenship still promote knowledge acquisition, as civic knowledge is accepted as one of several useful variables in predicting and promoting youth civic engagement (Youniss, 2011). Positive youth development, for example, is a branch of political socialization (Balsano, 2005; Larsen, 2006) that distinguishes itself by holding civic knowledge as valuable in regards to how students use that knowledge to unlock their inherent civic potential (Epstein & Sanders, 2002).[3] Civic engagement skills take precedence when the goal is engaged citizenship.

Despite the distinctions between citizenship goals, researchers suggest that civic engagement interventions should promote some form of action in participating youth. Differences appear in regards to the type of action desired. Some efforts prioritize personal

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based on this view of youth often serve to remove the various filters that prevent youth from expressing or acting on existing interests.

[3] And when content knowledge is a priority, it may well take a different form. For example, knowledge of political procedures based on how they maintain inequality or can be worked around, challenged, or altered.

knowledge development to promote understanding of government or personal interaction. This is the case of the iCivics program, which seeks to promote greater political engagement through increased understanding of government content and processes (iCivics, 2013). Immediate success in that context might come from increased test or survey scores. Long-term success might be demonstrated through increased voter turnout, compatible with duty-based citizenship. A more engaged program might try to demonstrate immediate success via increases in students' civic efficacy (Bandura, 1997) often measured through interviews or Likert-scale behavioral surveys. Long-term success might appear through increases in direct engagement or service. The different experiences, and the different types of action taken, are understood to impact the civic identity of participating youth. I now review literature on civic identity.

Civic Identity

Descriptions of citizenship in Dalton, Westheimer and Kahne, and others relate to the identity that citizens form in relation to their society. Civic identity is "a sense of oneself as a member of a community, to which one is emotionally attached and for which one feels responsible" (Hart, Richardson, & Wilkenfeld, 2010, p. 772). Explored in chapter three, the framework guiding this study relies on situated learning theory, specifically the concepts of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice. These concepts closely align with ideas of civic identity. Legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice relies on community members' sense of connection with their communities, the development of that connection and legitimate skills, and an ability to deliberate over the common good. These ideas synchronize with notions of civic identity.

Suggestions above that youth, and particularly those youth described as civically marginalized, value engaged citizenship stem from those youth's civic identity in relation to their

communities. The outsider status of civically marginalized youth relative to majority White society disinclines those youth from duty-based efforts like voting and following laws. Youth may believe that the officials for whom they vote do not hold youth interests in high regard, or that the laws are unfairly set against young and/or minority people. These youth still desire to improve society, and so they are instead inclined towards engaged actions like protests or social organizing. Civic identity can help capture these ideas.

Civic identity emerged as the work of developmental psychologist Erikson (1968) and others was applied to civic engagement. The most important prediction of civic identity is the relationship between the experiences a person has with the community, knowledge of that community, and basic democratic attitudes (Atkins & Hart, 2003). Civic identity seeks to explain the relationships that develop between people, their communities, and the people who live there.

The extent to which a person has a full and positive citizenship impacts the extent to which that person identifies themselves or others as having rights and responsibilities to a given community (Rawls, 1972). Putnam's (1995) associational living is one example of this connection, as the overall social cohesion of a given community is directly related to the collective identity of its members. Communities whose members enjoy more positive (or at least similar) civic identities will demonstrate greater social cohesion. As Levine (2014) shows, those communities are thus more able to withstand challenging circumstances.

Concluding a special issue of *Applied Developmental Science* devoted to examining "the evolving state of American society," Malin (2011, p. 111) argues that, although no comprehensive review of relevant education program's goals exists, the common goal of civic engagement interventions seems to be promoting civic identity in participating youth. Civic identity offers a rich and meaningful way to think about the ultimate goals of civic education and

civic engagement opportunities. Civic identity concerns the identity that a person forms relative to communities in which they live or operate.

Atkins & Hart (2003) describe two key elements of civic identity. First is a "sense of connection to a community" (p. 156). The specific type of community (e.g., school, neighborhood, city) is left open. Second is an awareness of and attendance to "entitlements and responsibilities" (p. 156) associated with the community. Entitlements include acts like voting and concepts like security. In part through entitlements, people form positive attitudes towards their communities (Flanagan & Faison, 2001). Those positive attitudes promote an interest in the general well being of the community. A well-developed sense of civic identity extends the attitudes towards a community into a sense of responsibility towards improving that community and a belief that improvement is possible. Responsibilities typically "include contributing to the health and functioning of the community" (Atkins & Hart, 2003, p. 156). Interpersonal relationships, built from the shared entitlements and responsibilities of community membership, help to strengthen and stabilize a community and those in it.

Youniss and Yates (1999) refer to the concepts of connection, entitlements, and responsibilities as "agency, social relatedness, and political-moral-understanding" (p. 25), which I return to later in this chapter. They argue that civic identity is always emerging through and mediated by youth backgrounds, understandings, and relationships with others. The development process requires a move "from a focus on the self to an understanding of the self in relationship to a larger, more complex world, and eventually to an understanding of obligation to make moral choices and act on behalf of the common good" (Hollander & Burack, 2008, p. 4). Youniss, McLellan, and Yates (1997) suggest that "civic engagement emanates from individuals" (p. 621)

rather than being imposed on citizens from without. This marks the development of civic identity as personal and contextualized; civic identity is a result of individuals' various civic experiences.

Studies of civic engagement suggest that the interpersonal relationships associated with civic identity are in general decline. This was the contribution of Putnam's (1997) work, which drew popular attention to the apparent decline in those civic associations. Some intervening studies have looked to social media and other online communications as new forms of Putnam's associational living. For example, Dahlgen (2005) offers a comprehensive review of how the Internet displaces older forums for civic interaction (e.g., town hall meetings) while also creating new avenues for pluralistic discussion. Despite the clear potential of online forums and other technologies, physical contact and action remain the ultimate expression of engaged citizenship, and the standard to which civic educators should aspire (Levine, 2014).

Declines in interpersonal relationships and community civic identity have been particularly noticeable and are particularly troubling in communities where the majority of residents are poor, minority, or lack formal education including a high school diploma (Atkins & Hart, 2003; see also data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Corporation for National and Community Service included in chapter one). Levine (2014) complicates that finding as he details the decline of cities in the Rust Belt, where many localities sharing those same demographics found different results following deindustrialization. The demographics of the cities were not the determining factor. The relationships that citizens had with each other, the group affiliations they held, and the opportunities that existed for individual citizens and groups to communicate with elected leaders (or take direct action themselves) were all important factors in determining the extent to which cities were able to navigate troubling economic change. But Levine also notes that communities with demographics related to the civic engagement gap are

less likely to enjoy positive relationships with government in ways that can help them propose and enact useful solutions. Those demographics are notable because they are the same markers associated with the civic engagement and opportunity gaps introduced in chapter one.

As with specific goals of civic education, civic identity is a complex and often highly individualized concept. Ethnicity, race, language, religion, geographic location, and other group associations are among the factors impacting civic identity. Civic identity is mediated through experiences with peers, family, and cultural or political leaders. To borrow from Brofenbrenner (1979), a series of systems and experiences interact to determine how people view themselves in relation to society. Youth civic identities, in short, "are rooted in their social relations and in the opportunities they have for civic practice" (Flanagan & Faison, 2001, p. 4).

Citizens in a democracy have an interest in and right to desire that schools promote certain civic identities over others (Gutmann, 1999). The civic education and engagement of immigrant groups—whose views and experiences are often presumed distinct from "native" Americans'—continues to garner interests (Ebert & Okamoto, 2013). These efforts may demonstrate a tension between promoting a shared American identity and encouraging individual or cultural identity. As Epstein's (2009) work on political and historic understanding reminds us, disagreements can and do stem from distinct views of what American civic identity is and represents. Those differences have, over time, compounded to generate civic gaps. Among these gaps is the civic opportunity gap. I now explore further evidence of the civic opportunity gap.

Evidence of the Civic Opportunity Gap

In this section I review key literature on the civic opportunity gap, particularly in United States public schools. The civic opportunity gap refers to imbalances in experiences with civic education during schooling. Imbalances are specifically connected to demographic markers like

race, ethnicity, income, and educational attainment. These imbalances relate to the problem of what Meira Levinson (2007) initially termed the "civic achievement gap" and others generally refer to as a civic engagement gap. Civic engagement involves "working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference" (Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi). As described in chapter one, the civic engagement gap refers to uneven levels of civic and political engagement, specifically measurable acts like voting and contacting government officials. Similar to the academic achievement gap, non-white, poor, and/or immigrant youth demonstrate reduced levels of civic knowledge, skills, motivation, and participation. The civic engagement gap is in part an outcome of the civic opportunity gap.

Kahne and Middaugh (2008) authored a seminal report for the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Education (CIRCLE) that helped establish the term *civic opportunity gap*. The two-part study analyzed knowledge and background surveys from "more than 2,500 California juniors and seniors" from 2005-2007 and a nationally representative sample of more than 2,800 freshmen from 124 schools (p. 3). The authors provide clear evidence that effective civic opportunities are provided more frequently in schools whose students plan to attend college, are wealthy, or are white.

Those same students are twice as likely as those with average socioeconomic levels to report studying how laws are made, almost twice as likely to participate in service activities, and almost 150% more likely to have classroom experience with debates (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Levinson (2010) provides a thorough review of the literature relevant to the "unjust civic empowerment gap among historically disenfranchised populations" (p. 331). She claims "Kahne and Middaugh certainly provide more than enough evidence to demonstrate that poor and non-

white students are receiving demonstrably less and worse civic education than middle class and wealthy, white students, and that school-level differences are partly to blame" (p. 350). Building on the claims made in Kahne and Middaugh (2008) Levinson argues that the gap is both product and demonstration of *de facto* racial segregation in American schooling. Students attending schools that serve predominantly poor or minority students are less likely to experience effective civic education, including the opportunities described in Kahne and Middaugh (2008). These same students also live in segregated communities whose residents are likely already demonstrating qualities associated with the civic engagement gap. This compounds the problem of unequal civic education. This also demonstrates how the civic opportunity gap and the civic engagement gap are closely linked: "students attending these schools are facing a civic opportunity gap in their neighborhoods as well as in their schools" (Levinson, 2010, p. 351). Those youth do not receive effective civic preparation either in school or at home.

Fridkin, Kenney, and Crittenden (2006) make similar claims based on a study conducted in six Arizona middle schools. The authors used questionnaires to investigate the political and civic knowledge, attitudes, and experiences of 439 students. The authors also conducted interviews with 10 of those students about their political and civic knowledge and attitudes. Disaggregating the data by race and socioeconomics status demonstrated clear differences, including in-school opportunities to practice important civic skills such as trying "to persuade others of their views" (p. 613). White middle class students demonstrated higher levels of civic and political knowledge, which the authors associate with more opportunities to practice civic and political skills in school and at home. Similarly to the large-scale studies reviewed next, Fridkin, Kenney, and Crittenden argue that civic inequalities are pervasive and damaging even before students enter high school.

For more than a decade scholars have used large scale national and international studies that also demonstrate that Blacks, Latinos, and the poor typically underperform on civic measures and receive less effective civic education relative to White or affluent students of the same ages. The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) includes a nationally representative sample of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students. The tests include measures of students' civic knowledge and the classroom practices teachers employ. Analyzing results of the 1998 test, Weiss, Lutkus, Grigg, and Niemi (2001) find significant differences in youth civic knowledge according to race. White students at all grades generally outperform black and Hispanic students in the same grades. The authors note that overall civic instruction seemed to improve from 1988 to 1998, with students reporting increases in time spent on social studies generally and civics specifically, as well as increased overall time spent on current events. The report was not verified through observations. Data on instruction was not broken out by race or socioeconomic status. It is conceivable that the method of instruction related to evidence from other studies in this chapter that minority students underperformed relative to White students. Such an assumption would be in keeping with other evidence of the civic opportunity gap, which clearly points to classroom opportunities as a primary factor in maintaining the gap.

The NAEP was repeated in 2006 and 2010. In 2010 7,100 students in fourth grade, 9,600 in eighth grade, and 9,900 in twelfth grade completed assessments that included measures of civic knowledge and skill. Compared with results from the previous assessments, students in fourth grade demonstrated gains in civic knowledge and skill, with average scores moving from 150 to 157 out of 300. Students in eighth grade remained effectively constant; the increase from 150 to 151 was not statistically significant. Students in twelfth grade showed slight decreases, with average scores of 150 in 1998, 151 in 2006, and 148 in 2010 (see Buckley, 2011).

Those twelfth grade results also show that most racial gaps maintained in the new assessment; only Hispanics showed improved scores from 1998 to 2010, though there was no significant gain in scores between 2006 and 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Relative to the "gap" of interest to this dissertation, the 2010 NAEP assessment showed the same pervasive problems as earlier versions of the assessment. Specifically, "the 19-point gap in civics in 2010 between White and Hispanic students was smaller than the gaps in both 2006 and 1998. The 29-point gap between White and Black students in 2010 was not statistically different from the score gap in either 2006 or 1998" (Buckley, 2010, p. 37). The civic gaps that contribute to the notion of civically marginalized youth maintained. This is perhaps not surprising, as overall time spent studying civics in twelfth grade was reported to have declined slightly, though the only significant decreases were in time spent studying the U.S. Constitution and the President and cabinet (p. 39).

Reviewing comparative studies of civic education in different regions of the world, Hahn (2010b) singles out the United States as a country with particularly severe "inequalities in civic opportunities" (p. 17). She makes this claim in part because the civic opportunity gap has received particular attention in the United States, but also because international assessments offer increasing opportunities for comparisons between countries.

The IEA Civic Education study of 1999 assessed the civic knowledge and attitudes of 2,811 ninth graders in 124 schools across 28 countries. Unfortunately, the United States did not participate in the 2009 version of that assessment, so relevant data is limited to what was collected in 1999. Hahn's comparative analysis finds that overall, students in the United States compare favorably with international peers. Within the United States, however, she finds that "students from low-income families and communities and African American and Hispanic

students do not do as well on civic knowledge tests as their more affluent and white peers" (p. 5). Her work highlights the inequalities that continue to concern so many for the future of civic engagement and, more importantly, civic representation within the United States. Not to downplay international testing competitions, this also suggests purely domestic reasons for focusing on improving civic education.

Torney-Purta's (2002) analysis of the same data yields similar results. She describes an "achievement gap" in important markers such as civic knowledge and the ability to "interpret such materials as election leaflets and newspaper stories about political issues" (p. 46). Students with fewer books in their home, who did not expect to complete high school, or who attended "schools with high levels of poverty" (p. 46) underperformed on the measures. Torney-Purta concludes that opportunities for meaningful civic education experiences, particularly discussion of relevant civic and political issues, are unevenly distributed in the United States. Her work provides evidence of the cost, in terms of civic skills, of unequal educational opportunities. Many citizens cannot effectively take in or act on information regarding current events or political issues. They are less informed about ongoing events that may impact their lives, may be more susceptible to coercion or misinformation, and seem poorly positioned to act on or have their interests represented.

Torney-Purta continued working with the 1999 IEA data, asking new questions and running new analyses. A further exploration concerned the civic education and engagement of immigrant and Hispanic youth (Torney-Purta, Barber, & Wilkenfeld, 2006). The authors find that immigrant and Hispanic youth have reduced competence in terms of civic and political knowledge and skill related to democratic participation. The authors explain this distinction in part because "immigrant students in general have fewer opportunities for civic skill development

because of inadequate instruction in relevant subjects provided in the schools that they attend" (p. 345). Further analysis (Torney-Purta, Barber, & Wilkenfeld, 2007) of the same data found that Latinos less frequently reported an open school climate or experiences studying political topics. The authors associate both of those qualities with effective opportunities for civic engagement. Like Levinson, (2010) Torney-Purta, Barber, and Wilkenfeld (2006; 2007) also fear that such youth are not receiving adequate civic preparation outside of school, compounding the problem.

In an interesting break from the majority of race and income-based research, Lay (2006) considers whether rural youth in the United States demonstrate the same civic opportunity gap. Lay grounds his study in the notion that despite the prevalence of poverty in rural areas, "individuals in rural areas are more likely to vote and to engage in other civic activities than those in poor urban areas" (p. 322). Drawing on survey data collected from 150 students at 29 high schools in the mid-Atlantic, Lay argues that youth in rural areas tend to engage in political discussions in classrooms with greater frequency than their urban counterparts, and that these discussions help to build political knowledge. An important note is that, even in rural areas, poor youth again underperform compared to affluent youth. Thus, although poor rural youth outperform their poor urban counterparts, Lay finds they are still less engaged that their wealthier peers in urban or rural areas. This echoes Hahn's conclusion that comparing divergent populations, whether country-to-country or country-to-city, can mask inequalities within the populations. As Checkoway and Aldana (2013) note, literature regarding youth of color in underserved areas "are few in comparison to literature on white youth living in higher-income areas" (p. 1895). Examining experiences within those specific populations is important. We

know those youths have life experiences that are distinct and distinctively marked by the qualities of their surroundings.

Research is consistent that youth who are—or attend schools in which most students are—poor, non-White, or unlikely to graduate high school or attend college are less likely to receive opportunities to build the knowledge and skill associated with effective civic engagement. These youths are also more likely to live in neighborhoods with lower rates of civic and political engagement, particularly in the traditional forms that include voting and contacting government officials. As Levine (2014) summarizes, "genuine civic engagement is in decline, neglected or deliberately suppressed by major institutions and ideologies and by the prevailing culture" (p. 3). He continues, "the children who need such experiences most are least likely to receive them" (p. 137). In the next section I review research on certain efforts to provide those otherwise absent opportunities for civic engagement.

Studies of Opportunities For Civic Engagement in School

In this section I review scholarly literature on interventions that seek to provide opportunities for civic engagement, particularly in schools associated with the civic opportunity gap. Educators describe specific methods of effective civic education associated with practicing the work of citizens (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). Methods include studying laws, engaging in classroom debates, or taking part in service learning projects (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Those methods link to expectations for citizens to do things like vote, discuss current events, or contact their government. Exposure to these "civic learning opportunities fosters notable improvements in students' commitment to civic participation" (Kahne & Sporte, 2008, p. 738). Opportunities also include practical efforts such as trips to government offices, participating in rhetoric clubs, or conducting community service. These are the opportunities often offered in certain Advanced

Placement, college credit, or elective courses. Less likely to attend college, or with schedules more often filled with basic course requirements, non-White, poor, or immigrant students frequently lack access to those opportunities. Because they are statistically less likely to have opportunities to practice civic engagement in schools these populations are believed less likely to engage in those actions outside of school.

Extracurricular or community-based programs are enjoying growing popularity (Shiller, 2012) and show benefits to participating youth and adults. Extracurricular programs do not face the same constraints on content, time, and methodology that may restrict in-school experiences (Malin, 2011). For example, Shiller (2012) reports that the more informal setting of two Bronx-based community organizations allowed adults to help youth develop civic knowledge and a commitment to social justice. Extracurricular programs can enable youth to engage with a more diverse group of people around a broader array of topics and may engender civic engagement efforts beyond the traditional forms often privileged in schools. Investigating American social religion through the guise of the "social revolutions" embodied in the 1960s and the recent Occupy Wall Street movement, Sullivan (2011) argues that such education can build social interdependence through authentic experiences with community diversity. Extracurricular programs are also more selective than in-school programs, often relying on youth to seek them out or volunteer their free time. Because my study addresses in-school civic engagement opportunities that may better engage a broader swath of at-risk youth, I focus on literature associated with in-school programs.

Longitudinal studies are difficult to engineer and maintain. Researchers often rely on self-reported beliefs regarding expected future engagement, either in degree (e.g., daily, monthly) or format (e.g., voting, joining a political party). Two research designs dominate civic

engagement literature. Most research follows what Wade (2008) calls a single intervention model often involving single-event, semester- or year-long curricular interventions (Levine, 2007). Levine describes a common program as one in which "young people decide on a social issue to tackle, conduct research, and then take some action" (p. 44-45). The specific goals may vary, but the general purpose is to instill some version of democratic dispositions and help students acquire civic knowledge. Schools or third-party programs may provide these interventions to their students during regular school hours, whether as elements of required courses or as additional electives.

Researchers administer some form of pre-test, implement or monitor some form of intervention, then administer a post-test and chart differences. These studies ask questions such as "What is the outcome of community service on student attitudes towards society?" (Youniss & Yates, 1997). Studies tend to focus on student experiences during intervention programs like service learning.

The second research design involves various regression analyses and multilevel models of large-scale survey data collected at regular intervals but not necessarily tied to a specific curricular intervention (see Kahne, Crow, Lee, 2012). Regression analyses focus on identifying individual variables that correlate with the researchers' hypothesis. These studies ask questions such as "Controlling for demographics, what is the correlation between reported community service experiences and expected future political involvement?" (Reinders & Youniss, 2006). Large-scale surveys also dominate the more limited research of practicing teachers and classroom-based civic engagement opportunities.

Large-Scale Programs Promoting Opportunities for Classroom Civic Engagement

In this section I explore research on two large-scale (inter)national civic engagement curricular programs, We The People and Kids Voting USA. Both programs seek to develop youth engagement through positive experiences working on real issues. Both civic engagement push-in programs are members of the National Action Civics Collaborative, whose growing membership suggests that schools, classrooms, and teachers have an interest in providing these opportunities. The National Action Civics Collaborative (Center for Action Civics, 2014) is a collection of groups working to provide civic engagement opportunities in school. Generation Citizen, which provides the intervention investigated in this study, is also part of this collaborative.

Reviewing the literature on youth civic engagement, Balsano (2005) argues that support for youth civic action is generally absent in communities associated with the civic opportunity gap. She calls for greater attention to pedagogies such as positive youth development, which treats youth as positive community elements. Reviewing frameworks relevant to positive youth development, Larsen (2006) argues that motivation is a necessary element to bridge the dominant school-community divide. Adolescents have their own intrinsic motivation systems, but through methods like positive youth development, teachers provide important "motivational scaffolding" (p. 685) for students. In their introduction to the *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement*, Sherrod, Torney-Purta, and Flanagan (2010) describe the benefits of positive youth development and similar perspectives that treats youth as community assets. Such programs open space for youth to describe issues in their communities and attempt efforts to address those issues. That process treats youth as a strength while fostering connections between people and communities. The process prioritizes student action and recognizes that opportunities for action require a "connection" between students and their community.

Similar issues-centered efforts promote civic engagement through critical thinking and the application of skills, not just memorization (Evans & Saxe, 1996). Rather than the dull and unmemorable experiences that can dominate social studies and civic learning (Rubin, 2012), issues-centered instruction uses "significant social and political issues" that build familiarity with civic engagement through experiences with civic engagement (Avery, Sullivan, Smith, & Sandell, 1996, p. 200). Such strategies approach civic engagement through a recognition that citizenship "lies not in increasing emphasis on subject matter as such, but on teaching procedures that stress participation and thinking" (Dimond, 1953, p. 207). Project-based (Bell, 2010) and youth participatory action research (Cammarota & Fine, 2008) also center learning experiences on key problems or cases of interest to students and teachers (Baeten, Knydt, Stuyven, & Dochy, 2010). Project-based learning is distinguished by a focus on investigating and understanding issues more than acting to address them (Blumenfeld et al, 1999). Youth participatory action research "provides young people with opportunities to study social problems affecting their lives and then determine actions to rectify these problems" (Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p. 2). Studies of two popular civic education programs support these claims.

We The People...Project Citizen is one example of a program that seeks meaningful student learning through the means of scaffolded opportunities for students to practice citizenship (Center for Civic Education, 2009). We The People has received great attention since its introduction in 1995. Countries outside the United States, including Ireland and Latvia, have implemented the program in hopes of promoting greater civic engagement from their populations. The program has received formal evaluation efforts in the United States since at least 1998. Tolo (1998) coordinated a nationwide study involving survey responses from students and teachers in each of 45 participating states, and observations and focus groups in

nine of those states. The report notes specific success stories from eight states. Tolo ultimately concludes that We The People is an effective program because it promotes social action in youth, defined as youth investigating and taking action on issues that matter to them. Despite the language of Tolo's finding, We The People closely follows the goals of what Dalton (2009) calls duty-based citizenship. The program seeks to promote duty-based civic engagement through monitoring of public policy and contacting government officials at all levels.

Although We The People does not specifically target civically marginalized youth, it is used in classrooms serving those populations. We The People also uses a familiar structure to other programs, like Generation Citizen, that do specifically target those populations. We The People engages students around an authentic and perplexing idea. Atherton (2000) describes a five-step process of guided investigation through which "students learn how to monitor and influence public policy" (p. 93). Students might select an issue of public health, transportation policy, or simply investigate an interesting topic from the physical sciences and use that topic as the entry point for practicing civic engagement. Youth are tasked with suggesting an inquiry topic, moving through their investigations, and testing an effort to engage or address the topic. Investigations focus on studying the existing laws that are most relevant to the issue.

More recent analyses (e.g., Center for Civic Education, 2007) using similar methods report increases in student civic knowledge and intent to participate in future engagement relative to students not participating in the program. The most recent specific study involved comparative statistical analysis of political knowledge gains between We The People and non-programmatic civic instruction in twenty Indiana secondary classrooms (Owen & Riddle, 2015). Using survey data to assess student knowledge before and after civics instruction the authors find slight gains associated with We The People relative to non-programmatic instruction. Among

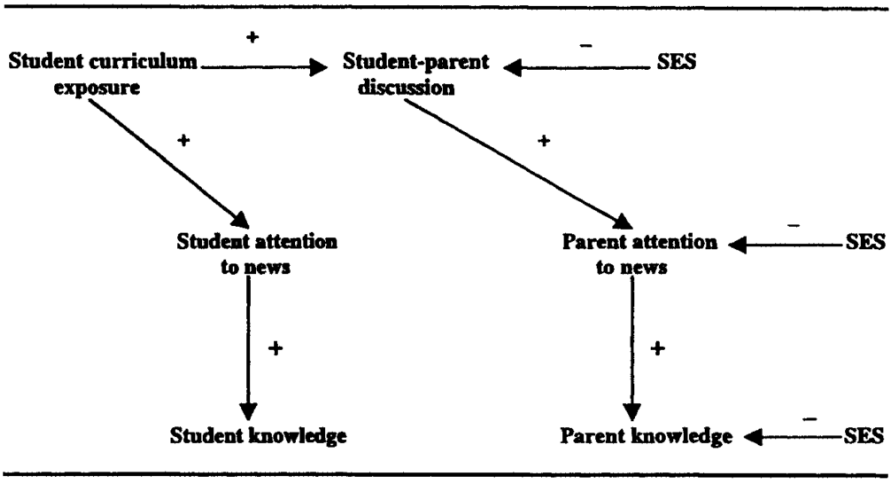
their findings, the authors report a strong relationship between open classroom climate (discussed further in the next section) and knowledge gains, and a negative correlation between community-based instruction and knowledge gains. Data was not disaggregated by ethnicity or socio-economic status, and the authors do not report on the specific instructional strategies employed in the classrooms. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that certain targeted programs such as We The People can increase political knowledge, which is positively correlated with engagement (see Galston, 2005), and promote duty-based civic engagement relative to non-targeted instruction.

The We The People program presaged recent national curriculum guidelines from the National Council for the Social Studies (2010) that considers a students' ability to "participate in communities through organizations…[and] act to accomplish public purposes through group problem solving" (p. 166) among the essential skills for an informed and engaged citizen. For Parker (2006) such participation and action are necessary for the formation of "civic consciousness" (p. 13) that is meaningful to the individual and useful to the society. We The People seems effective because it builds on a common and familiar template of issue identification, investigation, and action. This basic structure can be implemented in various contexts but may require greater student leadership than is customary in many classrooms.

Kids Voting USA is an example of a program focused on a narrowed form of action, specifically voter participation. Voting and voter registration are key aspects of Dalton's duty-based citizenship. In participating elementary and secondary schools around the country, Kids Voting USA socializes students to political issues, reviews important laws, includes a mock election, and encourages youth to accompany their parents to voting booths on Election Day.

Several studies have investigated the Kids Voting curriculum regarding student and other outcomes. McDevitt and Chaffee (2000) interviewed 457 pairs of participating students and their parents. The authors directly credit participation in the program with increases in youth attention to news and current events. As students take that interest home with them, they impact their families as well, offering parents an opportunity to develop their own political engagement. The finding supports the authors' framework for how curriculum instruction impacts student and parent knowledge (see Figure 2-1). The authors hypothesize that students who are exposed to an engaging civics curriculum naturally share their experiences with their parents, who then engage in supportive behaviors such as watching TV news. McDevitt and Chaffee conclude that the Kids Voting curriculum overcomes the negative effects of low SES.

Figure 2-1:
Curriculum Influence on Student and Parent Political Knowledge



(McDevitt & Chafee, 2000, p. 262)

Two other studies demonstrated similar results, what the authors call a "trickle-up" effect (Merrill, Simon, & Adrian, 1994; Simon & Merrill, 1998). Authors found that communities with Kids Voting in schools had higher overall rates of voting among the adult population. Interventions that seek to promote action in youth may also encourage action in other community

members. Such spillover seems to occur as community members perceive the efficacy of civic engagement efforts like voting, though there is no clear causal link. In many communities such efforts could be novel experiences. Thus, without specifically targeting civically marginalized youth or their parents, this program may promote duty-based citizenship in those populations.

Despite a clear focus on civically marginalized groups, such findings are heartening because they suggest actual impacts may outstrip the often narrow stated objectives of interventions. One area of consideration that remains unexplored is whether participation in civic engagement programs—even those focused on duty-based engagement such as voting—also impact participant attitudes regarding aspects of engaged citizenship. Perhaps participation in a program such as Kids Voting USA also increases youth propensity for organizing or protest. Also unexplored are questions of the reception that such programs have in different communities. Perhaps the more engaged approach of We The People finds better traction in civically marginalized communities relative to the duty-based approach of Kids Voting USA.

Research on Classroom Practices: What Teachers Say and Do

Programs such as We The People and Kids Voting USA typically make heavy use of discussion; this is a common approach in issues-based curricula. In this subsection I explore literature on how instructional choices such as discussion relate to civic engagement. The frequent international context (see Evans, 2006; Myers, 2007; Oulton, Day, & Dillon, 2004; Schugerensky & Myers, 2003) places many of these studies outside the immediate context of the U.S. civic opportunity gap that grounds my study. We must remember that teachers differ in how they promote and understand civics education. As Marri (2010) observes, "we know that teachers' prior life experiences, beliefs, and assumptions influence their perceptions and conceptions of citizenship and serve to craft the pedagogy used in their classrooms" (p. 355).

Descriptions of teachers' conceptions and attitudes towards civic engagement demonstrate how prior experiences can shape teaching methods, but existing literature offers limited guidance for American educators looking to address existing inequities in domestic civic education.

Several case studies have investigated how what teachers do—or what they say they want to do—can promote civic engagement. Marri (2005) investigates public school teachers' use of discussion to draw out diversity and foster democratic communities in their classrooms. He argues that teachers can promote multicultural democracy even in contexts that, on the surface, appear homogeneous. Given that public schools in the United States are increasingly segregated and homogeneous (Wells, Holme, Revilla, & Atanda, 2009) and that such homogeneity tends to reduce opportunities for civic engagement (Levinson, 2010), Marri's findings offer hope for many educators. Researchers such as those at CIRCLE increasingly focus on the importance of citizens meeting and working with people who may hold different views on civic issues. Levine devotes much of his 2014 work to describing strategies for building skills people need to deliberate within diverse groups.

Although teachers can highlight diversity where it seems lacking, they can also limit opportunities for broadened understandings. For example, Journell (2011) reports on the quality of six teachers' approaches to fostering classroom discussions of the 2008 presidential election. Journell finds that teacher disclosure, or the choice to share their opinions on controversial matters, frames the discussions in ways that can limit student sharing. As issue selection, investigation, and action can be contentious or controversial, teachers must be thoughtful in how they expand or limit space for that work. Familiarity with the process and an understanding of possible challenges are important. For example, Zwaams, Dam, and Volman (2006) surveyed 363 pre-service and practicing secondary teachers. Unsurprisingly, the authors report that pre-

service and novice teachers are less skilled at defining and helping their students reach specific civic goals.

Studies like that reported from Bolinger and Warren (2007), who administered surveys to teachers in 19 Indiana schools, also point to discrepancies between what teachers want to achieve with a given teaching strategy and the outcomes they report from their classrooms. Participating teachers preferred student-centered instructional techniques, but reported using lecture during 22.5% of class time. By comparison student research and debate, which are associated with interventions and instructional methods reviewed above, were used 8.3 and 1.4% of the time, respectively. The social studies teachers in this study tend towards passive and inauthentic pedagogies that limit opportunities for students to engage real issues in meaningful ways.

Farkas and Duffett (2010) surveyed a total of 1,111 secondary social studies teachers from around the United States and conducted three focus groups with selected participants. Fewer than half of the teachers believed they should focus on "promoting good civic behaviors such as voting and community service" (p. 7). The authors report that most respondents prioritized content and procedural knowledge, such as the Bill of Rights and separation of powers. Most respondents also considered mandated curricula and testing as hampering the proper goals of effective social studies and citizenship education. Though content and procedural knowledge are important, following through on those mandates means less time for discussing or planning civic engagement.

The studies from Bolinger and Warren (2007) and Farkas and Duffett (2010) provide little information about what civic engagement opportunities teachers provided. Questions focus on general instructional strategies such as lecture or debate without reporting on instructional objectives or context such as class projects. Lectures *can* be a valid component of education for

civic engagement; debate *can* be tangential. With no observations of teacher practice or substantiation from students or administrators these self-reported data have limitations. Put differently, these studies tell us only that most teachers probably do not address civic engagement in the ways they would like. What opportunities teachers provide in their limited time remains understudied, as do the outcomes associated with these opportunities. These studies did not examine whether participant attitudes towards civic engagement shifted over time.

Two recent dissertations in the U.S. more directly address those questions. Holt (2009) investigated the civic attitudes of secondary social studies teachers at 25 public schools in an urban Florida district before and after summer professional development. Using pre- and post-test surveys, Holt found that increases in teacher civic knowledge correlated with greater confidence in their ability to effectively teach "challenging" civics including controversial topics through discussion. This finding held true even when measurements of teacher civic knowledge showed no increase; that is, even teachers' perceived knowledge was associated with their self-efficacy in teaching civics.

Phipps (2010) investigated four Midwestern social studies teachers' beliefs regarding civic education and democratic citizenship. Phipps reported ten findings, including an argument that teachers who were more politically involved outside school were more likely to promote an open classroom climate and student-led discussions. Though the dissertations shared expected limitations, most specifically the lack of student participants, Holt (2009) suggests an interesting avenue for research: how classroom civic engagement opportunities might act as professional development for practicing teachers.

Curricular and accountability pressures are real, but many teachers maintain considerable control over the particular learning experiences in their classrooms. Research into teacher

experiences with those opportunities remains limited. What is clear is that teachers can have an important impact on the educational experiences in their rooms. This impact ranges from expanding student awareness of diversity (Marri, 2005) to effectively limiting student opportunities to engage with important civic skills (Bolinger & Warren, 2007).

Studies of Community Service and Service Learning Interventions

In this subsection I explore research on community service and service learning interventions, which are among the most popular type of civic engagement curriculum. To help understand the different approaches to promoting civic engagement within the United States, Mooney and Edwards (2001) attempt to combine some of the relevant civic education theories. Atop the resulting hierarchy is service-learning advocacy. This type of instruction involves the community, renders service, counts as formal credit, promotes the application and acquisition of skills, incorporates structured reflection, and highlights social action. The final point—highlighting social action—is most important; student social action helps distinguish this kind of education from traditional direct instruction (Newmann, 1975). A social action component encourages students to take on relevant, real-world problems rather than learning about them through traditional direct instruction (Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996).

Social action also describes what Dalton (2009) later called engaged citizenship, and is believed to appeal to youth for the same reasons as engaged citizenship. Mooney and Edwards (2001) argue that the inclusion of social action enables youth "to appreciate fully the relations of power in a society as they endeavor to affect social change in the context of critical reflection and dialogue with others who are similarly engaged" (p. 187). This relates to the civic efficacy that may positively influence others in the community. Youth must collaborate with others in

order to investigate and work to address pressing problems, thereby impacting both youth and their collaborators.

In certain public school curricula students receive most of their course credit from community projects (Pace & Tesi, 2004). Frequent participation in service learning experiences throughout the year is ideal. Particularly in extended programs, civic engagement experiences can provide leadership opportunities for youth. There are common-sense reasons for this. More practice means that youth are more familiar with the work. Extended programs can provide the time for youth to move through each of the stages, including the important social action stage.

Research supports these explanations. The archetype study of the impact of service learning on youth civic engagement involved statistical analysis of data culled from 4,052 surveys completed by secondary students in Chicago before and after a two-year interim (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). Through regression analysis, the authors reported "the impact of civic learning opportunities and of experiencing service learning" (p. 753) was greater than other variables (e.g., demographics, neighborhood context) on students' intended future civic engagement. School experiences were the greatest contributor to civic participation—even greater than parent involvement or prior student commitment to participation. This study is consistently cited as evidence that classroom practices have an important impact on students' planned civic engagement.[4] The authors specifically included civically marginalized students, offering further support for addressing the civic engagement gap through focused classroom opportunities.

Kahne, Crow, and Lee (2012) performed a cross-sectional analysis on the same data set. Asking questions about the impact of particular pedagogies on student engagement, the authors found that open discussion of social issues promoted greater youth interest in political

[4] A 2013 Google scholar search returned 136 articles that cite this work.

engagement generally and voting specifically. Experiences with service learning, on the other hand, promoted increases in youth community actions and positive community associations, which we can term civic identity. The authors concluded that classrooms opportunities have clear impacts on youth engagement.

This follows Niemi and Junn's (1998) finding "that some educational practices can increase students' civic and political knowledge" (Kahne & Sporte, 2008, p. 740). Reaching similar conclusions, Youniss and Yates (1997) emphasized the effectiveness of student action and civic participation. The authors extend the work of Willis (1977) on social resistance, asking whether adults have failed to establish positive options for youth student action leading to the development of positive civic identity. Their study of mandatory service in a soup kitchen at a primarily black Catholic school notes "service may be an occasion for adolescents to experience themselves as makers of history by providing meaning beyond the mere accommodation of their lives in passive compliance to society" (Youniss & Yates, 1997, p. 21). The authors identified three specific types of opportunities that promote development of civic identity: *political-moral understanding*, *opportunities for agency*, and *social relatedness*. Echoing later descriptions of engaged citizenship, the Youniss and Yates framework allows the assessment of programs that promote civic participation in youth based on the components of those programs. While this study took place in a private school, the suggestions are generalizable to public school populations as well. Political-moral understanding suggests students must grasp their social responsibility. Student agency allows action. Social relatedness encourages collaboration.

Analyzing data from the National Education Longitudinal Study, Rouse (2012) argues that high school leadership opportunities have a positive impact on college attendance and graduation, which are positively correlated with civic engagement. These academic markers can

be self-affirming, as “an effective civic education develops habits of democratic attitude and participation that are carried forward into adult civic and political activities" (Malin, 2011, p. 113). In addition to such markers of engaged citizenship, researchers also report increased thinking skills, academic performance, interpersonal skills, and community connectedness based on accepted traditional assessments like the Cornell Critical Thinking Test (American Institutes for Research, 2005). Recall that community connectedness is one of the key aspects of a positive or mature civic identity (Hart, Richardson, & Wilkenfeld, 2010). The connected aspect of such civic identity is a desire to help others in the community.

The chief outcome of community service opportunities may be a long-term dedication for “volunteering to help others and to solve social problems” (Metz & Youniss, 2005, p. 414). This can also involve dedication to helping those in the school community, which we might consider demonstrative of a highly localized civic identity. For example, Swaminathan (2004) studied the effects of one action-oriented program on urban youths. He interviewed students and teachers at one high school implementing such a curriculum about what made the school successful. Swaminathan argued that “students became invested in the life of the school” through repeated community contact (p. 56). In a follow-up study of graduates from the same school, Swaminathan (2005) reported that students identified community projects as the primary contributor to their successful graduation. Exposure to those civic engagement opportunities corresponded to significantly increased student attitudes towards their school and community.

School experiences also seem to promote a positive association between students and their extracurricular communities. McDonnell and Jackson (1999) explored similar offerings from the Close Up Capital Experience, which promotes “greater civic participation in people of all ages” through guided explorations of the political process, including simulations and debates.

Through interviews and observations of middle school students, the authors concluded the experiences "prove helpful in fostering a lifelong commitment [to community]" (McDonnell & Jackson, 1999, p. 194). Participating students seemed to internalize the process while also developing positive associations with the effort. The authors did not follow up with participants after the program, but still argued students were more likely to take on similar efforts in the future because students had a framework they believed could be successful.

Other researchers have more closely examined the role of school experiences in fostering community connections. In a review of place identification, Wilson (1997) argued that opportunities for community involvement are crucial to forming a "sense of place" (p. 191). Reviewing interviews with participating students, Wilson found a heightened awareness of how youth related to their communities, and perceived responsibility to improve that community. But youth were also aware of the challenges to any such effort, particularly in terms of sharing their ideas in a productive way. Communicative competence describes the propensity and ability to communicate with others (McLeod, Shah, Hess, & Lee, 2012), and could be seen as a hallmark of democratic citizenship (Parker, 2010). Communicative competence increases as students practice civic engagement in school (McLeod, Shah, Hess, & Lee, 2012). A key factor in communicative competence is whether the school environment fosters a sense of community connection. Schooling is a "dominant force in [student] lives" (Wilson, 1997, p. 192) and can determine how students relate to their communities. Wilson notes that schools occur in all communities, so bridging the divide between schools and communities can occur in any context. The addition of efforts to communicate action to a larger audience both enables positive spillover and reinforces the overall process for participating youth.

Community contact and communication was the focus of Checkoway, Allison, and Montoya's (2005) examination of the political outlooks of youth in San Francisco. The authors reviewed the San Francisco Youth Commission, a forum for youth in the city to bring issues and solutions to political leaders. This interesting approach blended aspect of duty-based citizenship (working through political channels like elected officials) and engaged citizenship (direct collective action to draw attention to their interests). Through formal support from their community, students developed more nuanced understandings of political and community proceedings, and actively take part in discussions that influence their communities. The authors concluded that "young people should participate in public policy at the municipal level, and it is time to recognize them as competent citizens and community builders" (Checkoway, Allison, & Montoya, 2005, p. 1160). They supported the claim that experiences with political and community decisions can significantly influence student attitudes towards civic engagement.

Reinders and Youniss (2006) assessed the impact of mandatory community service on 603 middle- and upper-class high school students. Community service was mandated in the schools, but not the type of service. The longitudinal study found a series of steps involved in associating service learning experiences with increased civic engagement. First, student contact with those in need brought a sense that students had benefitted the organizations. It was not clear whether those people needing help could be the students. Perhaps a less-affluent student body would be able to focus their efforts internally with similar results. Regardless, in the study, that feeling of benefit increased students' self-awareness of issues and the people facing issues, which ultimately brought a stated desire to be civically engaged in order to further address the problems.

Riedel (2002) provides evidence that community service programs, when they provide formal political experience and public action, "increase political engagement as measured by feelings of civic obligation" (p. 499). His investigation focused on 294 students in four urban Minnesota high schools who self-selected to participate in school-based community service programs. After controlling for other socialization factors, Riedel (2002) reported a statistically significant link between participation in the programs and positive student outlooks towards participation, but "only under certain conditions" (p. 518). Community service programs were beneficial with regards to developing democratic citizenship when based on participation that expanded classroom activities to consider larger social and political issues. Riedel suggested further research is needed on the varying contexts of civic engagement education.

Perhaps following Riedel's (2002) suggestion, Metz and Youniss (2005) compared the attitudes towards civic engagement of students enrolled in a community service program with those not enrolled.[5] They assessed whether compulsory community service promotes "volunteering to help others and to solve social problems" (Metz & Youniss, 2005, p. 414). The authors investigate student-reported attitudes towards future voting, conventional (duty-based) civic involvement, and unconventional (engaged) civic involvement. Through longitudinal comparisons of three high school cohorts, Metz and Youniss found that students who participated in the required service programs scored higher on surveys measuring intent to vote and participate in civic actions in the future: students were more motivated to be civically engaged. For students who were civically marginalized, participation in the service program significantly improved ($p < .05$) their interest in future civic engagement.

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[5] This work is a revisiting of a study published two years prior (Metz & Youniss, 2003) in which the authors conclude that required community service increased high schoolers' enthusiasm for general service.

Youniss continued his work in experimental design studies. The CIRCLE report of McIntosh, Berman, and Youniss (2010) provides one of the most comprehensive examinations of how educational programs can influence student attitudes towards civic engagement. The five-year study analyzed the attitudes of 857 graduating seniors towards community service following enrollment in a program of community service and political discussion. Exposure to experiential civics education corresponded to significantly increased student attitudes towards civic engagement. This supports Riedel's (2002) earlier suggestion that community service programs including structured political interaction are effective in promoting civic engagement.

The above studies tend to focus on schools with established service learning components, but there is also encouraging evidence for educators in schools with more traditional curricula who take on aspects of service learning pedagogy. McIntosh, Berman, and Youniss (2010) interviewed an average of 29 high school seniors each year for five years to explore the impacts of a new civic engagement program in the school based on incorporating one year of community oriented service. The authors argue that even one year in a program of community service and political discussion can help students develop "high levels of political knowledge, show greater intention to vote in the future, and do better on a range of civic outcomes" (McIntosh, Berman, & Youniss, 2010, p. 3). Importantly for the work reported in this dissertation, the gains were larger for civically marginalized groups. The authors conclude that the most important facet is for schools to make civic engagement opportunities available, specifically those that provide scaffolding from adults. On an even more micro level, as few as "two or three class sessions" (Avery, Sullivan, Smith, & Sundell, 1996, p. 207) of issues-centered learning can promote familiarity with and interest in the process.

Benefits of these experiences seem to accrue quickly and then build over time. Perhaps youth are indeed interested in opportunities to engage this kind of work. Dalton's evidence of younger generations' increasingly strong association with engaged rather than duty-based citizenship is born out by much of the data reviewed above. Younger generations tend towards distrust of politicians and the political system (Loeb, 1999) in ways that motivate them towards the more direct engagement with their issues and those impacted by them. The interventions reviewed demonstrate the potential of curricular efforts to address symptoms of the civic gaps at the heart of this study. The large-scale opportunity and engagement gaps remain, a symptom of larger inequities in American education and society, but educators have the tools and ability to promote greater civic engagement within their particular areas of influence. In the following section I more directly explore the conditions that can help educators in those efforts.

Conditions for Youth Civic Engagement

In this subsection I review the conditions that might promote youth civic engagement. The typology offered in Youniss and Yates (1997) offers a chance to think about the conditions that promote youth civic engagement. There is clear overlap between these characteristics and the three conditions that Marzano and Kendall (2007) argue must be satisfied for students to feel motivated to engage in a task or initiate the learning process. First, students must perceive the importance of the endeavor. Second, students must have a sense of efficacy. Finally, they must have a positive emotional response to the task at hand. Applied to civics education, this framework suggests that students must understand the importance of civic engagement, believe in their ability to engage their communities, and receive supportive feedback for their efforts. The conditions are not steps; they are part of an iterative, circular process that reinforces intrinsic motivation through positive experience. There are many similarities between this process and

other descriptions of civic engagement. When these conditions are met the result tends towards positive civic identity, described through positive associations or connections with one or more communities.

In examining ten successful civics education programs, Kahne and Westheimer (2003) identify three student outcomes: commitment, capacity, and connection. Following participation in a successful program, students are committed to "specific social issues" (Kahne & Middaugh, 2010, p. 149), believe they can effect change, and feel a connection to others who share that belief. Kahne and Westheimer (2003) argue that civics engagement is not "derived exclusively from personal attributes" but rather "enabled and shaped through interactions and connections within a community" (p. 63). All ten successful programs they study make explicit the importance of connection—developing supportive communities and building relationships with role models, an application of communicative competence (McLeod, Shah, Hess, & Lee, 2012). Kahne and Westheimer (2003) emphasize the importance of ordinary role models for high school students, who can support students in "imagin[ing] themselves as civics actors" at "this point in time where [they are] trying to figure out what to do with [their lives]" (p. 64). This closely parallels Marzano and Kendall's (2007) priorities of importance, efficacy, and emotional response; Youniss and Yates' (1997) call for *political-moral understanding*, *agency*, and *social relatedness;* and increases in *student attitudes*, *performance*, and *internal motivation* identified as common ends of successful programs (American Institutes for Research, 2005; Glenn, 2000; Lieberman & Hoody, 1998; McIntosh, Berman, & Youniss, 2010).

The process of encouraging civic development mirrors the process of encouraging development in other academic and affective areas. If educators hope youth will develop as engaged citizens, regular opportunities to practice civic engagement are needed. If educators

hope students will develop the habits of engaged citizens, schools should offer supportive opportunities for students to practice learning about and taking action on real issues that matter to the students. At least one study, using the same IEA data reported earlier, found that teachers in Australia, England, and the United States believe precisely those things (Chin & Barber, 2010).

Students selecting an issue; researching it; and planning, attempting, or taking action is a best practice in education for civic engagement. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (2003) also highlights these steps. The comprehensive report identifies three promising approaches to civics education: 1) *formal instruction* in democratic government; 2) *discussion* of relevant current events; 3) *meaningful action* that allows students to respond civically and politically to important issues. When combined, these approaches should promote all of the identified benefits of effective civics education: civic, political, and community knowledge, skills, attitudes, and participation (Carnegie Corporation of NY & CIRCLE, 2003). There is a clear call for student action as part of civic education.

Studies of civic engagement opportunities in classrooms often relate to specific interventions. Interventions either explicitly target youth associated with the civic opportunity gap or are shown to have positive impact on those youth. Even when those youth are not targeted they may demonstrate the greatest growth (McIntosh, Berman, & Youniss, 2010). As with We The People these interventions can come from outside the school. Interventions within the school generally follow a program of service learning or similar engagement based around contact with the community. Regardless of whether the interventions being studied come from outside (McDevitt & Chaffee, 2000) or inside the school (Metz & Youniss, 2005), the general focus of these efforts is for youth to work with others to address real world problems. The various

typologies of civic engagement suggest that promoting relationships between participating students, their classmates, their schoolmates, and/or their community is crucial to the development of civic engagement.

Even the landmark studies from Riedel (2002), Metz and Youniss (2003, 2005), and McIntosh, Berman, and Youniss (2010) have significant limitations. Their studies assess a narrow band of civic engagement—community service—in programs that allow limited student decisions regarding their engagement. For example, political organizing was not a component of the reviewed programs. The application of their varied methods to other civics education programs would likely yield valuable additions to existing literature.

Distilling research on civic education allows a better understanding of what specific actions educators can take to address the civic engagement gap through in-school opportunities for civic engagement. The literature provides support for a "best methods" approach to education for civic engagement instruction. Different strategies can encourage students to work in groups, actively engage their communities with the goal of identifying and correcting existing issues, and/or consistently reflect on the activity as both a learning experience and evidence of their own civic potential. One of the most important decisions educators face is which strategy/ies to involve in their classroom. Some of those decisions may be made outside the classroom, as in the case of curricular requirements, or entirely up to teacher discretion. In either case, the type of instructional strategy/ies chosen should relate to ideas about and attitudes towards civic engagement and citizenship. I now review literature regarding the ideas of citizenship used to frame civic engagement opportunities.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

The purpose of this review was to investigate the literature on the broader purposes of

civic education, evidence of the opportunity gap, and efforts to provide opportunities for civic engagement in schools. In this section I report broad lessons synthesized from existing literature regarding what is known about the civic opportunity gap and efforts to address civic gaps through school-based opportunities for civic engagement. I also review some of the shared limitations of existing studies. I do not seek to address all of the potential limitations or gaps of existing scholarship. Instead I situate this dissertation in what is known, not known, and common in the field.

Literature demonstrates a tension regarding ideas of citizenship. This is apparent between studies like Levine (2014) that prioritizes engaged citizenship, and those such as Buckley (2011) that prioritize duty-based citizenship through discrete knowledge of civic institutions and systems. Engaged citizenship suggests that individual citizens can work to address issues themselves. Duty-based citizenship suggests that individual citizens should work through elected officials, either by voting or personal communication. In highlighting the civic opportunity gap, the body of research led by Meria Levinson tries to consider those different goals. This literature demonstrates that opportunities for all types of civic engagement in schools (engaged and duty-based citizenship) are distributed unequally.

Literature on civic engagement experiences often focuses on "various indicators reflecting knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behaviors of individuals working to address various areas of public concern" (Vogelgesang in Hollander & Burack, 2008, p. 14). Existing research focuses on curricular interventions (Wade, 2008) based on a belief that "citizenship education ought to include the opportunity for students to actually do the things that good citizens do" (Conrad, 1991, p. 540). The association is that measured civic engagement outside of school is correlated with these opportunities to practice civic engagement in school.

Existing literature demonstrates the potential value of certain classroom experiences to promote civic engagement in youth. Research suggests that meaningful civics education generally includes opportunities for youth to identify problems that are important to them, work with others to investigate those problems, and propose or implement solutions to those problems. Research from Dalton (2009) and others suggest that Americans—particularly those born after 1980—are increasingly interested in working on issues themselves, rather than through elected officials.

These experiences seem to promote informed and engaged citizenship among students associated with the low end of the civic gaps. Increased content knowledge is one tangible benefit reported from such experiences. Other studies point to less tangible benefits such as increased community connection, a heightened sense of belonging, and a developing student ownership of problems and solutions. The literature also demonstrates that educators understand the problem (civic opportunity gap), can track the symptoms (fewer opportunities for certain youth to practice civic engagement), and have implemented potential solutions (altered civic education).

It is worth considering why, if the face of this information, the problem persists. Anyon, Kozol, and others would suggest that the education system in the United States is not interested in helping the most marginalized students, or that the inequalities are too systemic for teachers alone to address. Some decision makers might argue that existing studies lack the experimental controls prioritized by recent federal legislation. Though they are not responsible for making decisions about policy, Torney-Purta, Amadeo, and Andolina (2010) specifically argue that inconsistencies in research methods may hamper the acceptance of results. Other significant limitations studies include:

- Lack of control groups
- Small sample size
- Highly localized studies
- Inattention to the impact of context
- Unreported potential selection bias
- Unreported prior student experiences

This study shares certain of these limitations, common to qualitative inquiry, but also seeks to address certain limitations. This study is closely attentive to the impact of context. Defined in chapters three and four, context factors played an important role in the findings reported in chapter five. Certain interview questions were designed in this study to capture prior student experiences.

This study also provides careful reports of student demographics, preventing distinction between students who may be on opposite ends of the described gaps. Urban and diverse are not necessarily synonymous with non-White, poor, and/or not college-bound. Nevertheless, consistency of researcher conclusions across the studies suggests basic reliability.

Most importantly, this study considers the classroom as a community. Data collection involved representatives of all key classroom stakeholders. Research often fails to recognize that students and teachers are stakeholders, mutually implicated in and impacted by classroom experiences. Few studies report either the role of classroom teachers in providing such opportunities, or the experience of classroom teachers during such opportunities. Available studies are frequently international in scope. What domestic studies exist often present teacher beliefs independent of their actual practice (e.g., Farkas & Duffett, 2010) and may not include how teacher beliefs relate to civic engagement opportunities for marginalized youth (e.g., Torney-Purta, Barber, & Richardson, 2005).

In a review of research on service learning, Wade (2008) ultimately concluded that the omission of shared student and teacher experiences clouds analyses, and represents a gap the

research. The above review of literature suggests her claims still apply to broad civic engagement research. Research needs to address civic engagement opportunities by treating the classroom as a community. This study seeks to address this key gap in the literature while also investigating the changes among and between classroom stakeholders that may result from civic engagement opportunities.

Recall Checkoway and Aldana's (2013) call for studies that investigate the experiences of civically marginalized youth within their own communities, rather than in comparison to white or "higher income areas" (p. 1895). Their call highlights one key goal of this study. This dissertation seeks investigations of civic educational experiences within one sub-group of New York City secondary students. I seek to explore these students' experiences (along with their teachers) in relation to their own context rather than an external standard. Focusing on student-teacher intentions and interactions within classrooms associated with the civic opportunity gap, I ask how classroom practices can be leveraged to address the ongoing civic opportunity gap. I next review my framework for conceptualizing civic engagement, based on existing literature regarding the civic opportunity gap and efforts to address this ongoing problem.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I introduce the conceptual framework guiding this study. This framework is based on situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and efforts to apply that theory to civic engagement (Torney-Purta, Amadeo, & Andolina, 2010). I focus on the experiences of individuals in specific contexts, called communities of practice. Studies of civic engagement can and should examine the experiences of students and teachers together in their communities of practice. Communities of practice are not limited to deliberate sites of learning such as classrooms, but encompass the people, context, and processes involved in any long-term social interaction such as school, the home, or work. The framework in this chapter draws attention to important components within those communities of practice, which lends structure to the data analysis described in chapter four and findings reported in chapter five.

I organize this chapter into three main sections. In the first section I examine situated learning and communities of practice. In the second section I review an example of applying situated learning theory to understand civic engagement. In the third section I explain how I apply situated learning theory in this study. I conclude with a chapter summary.

Situated Learning and Communities of Practice

In this section I define situated learning theory and communities of practice. First described in Lave and Wenger (1991), situated learning theory (sometimes called social learning theory) situates all learning in the social contexts in which it occurs. The theory explains how participation in "social learning systems" (Wenger, 2000, p. 226) advances knowledge and skills. According to Lave and Wenger, learning is not the individual collection or demonstration of knowledge. Learning involves interactions in various social systems, and learning cannot be divorced from the social systems in which it occurs. Social systems shape "not only what we do but also who we are and how we interpret what we do" (Correa, Martínez-Arbelaiz, & Gutierrez,

2013, p. 450). Those social systems are defined as communities of practice, associations through which people define "what constitutes competence in a given context" (Wenger, 2000, p. 229). Competence refers to the general body of knowledge and skill within a given community. Context refers to the community of practice within which a person interacts and learns.

In situated learning theory, a member of a community of practice benefits from participation in the community by acquiring shared knowledge and skill. The member is able to help advance that community of practice by adding their knowledge and skill to the shared knowledge and skill maintained in the community of practice. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2014) give an example of a dentist who is held to a certain level of competence by other dentists (e.g., continuing professional development) but can also impact how the community of dentists defines competence (e.g., pioneering new treatments).

Membership in a community of practice depends on legitimate peripheral participation. Legitimate peripheral participation is generally associated with the professional traditions of apprenticeship. Newcomers to the community learn from observing or listening to more experienced members. Peripheral participants also maintain greater connection with outside communities of practice and can therefore make important contributions to how their new community engages with others. Over time peripheral participants should move closer to the symbolic center of the community. Moving towards that center requires understanding how the community defines competence. Moving from the periphery also "transforms our identities" (Wenger, 1998b, p. 227). The transformation involves realizing that we are capable, competent, and valued members of the community.

Eckert (2006) provides a sample of the wide range of formats a community of practice can take, such as "a bowling team, a book club, a friendship group, a crack house, a nuclear

family, a church congregation" (p. 683). The key component of these communities is a "shared practice" built around common experiences with "things that matter" to the members of that community (Wenger, 1998a, p. 2). Shared experiences and efforts within communities of practice help "bind people together and help to facilitate relationship and trust" (Smith, 2003, p. 2). This is largely comparable with the associational living and social capital described in Putnam (1995) and elsewhere (see Levine, 2014).

It is important to note that all people are members of multiple communities of practice. Some of these may overlap while others remain distinct. For instance, a student will engage one community of practice in class as they work with the teacher and certain of their peers in a particular content area. A student in a science class is in a different community of practice than a student in a social studies class. We would expect differences in how those communities define competence, including things like behavioral expectations, background knowledge, or the ultimate outcome of time in that setting. Similarly, the community outside school is understood as many separate communities of practice from the communities inside school. Etienne Wenger has begun using "landscapes of practice" to refer to the multiple communities of practice that make up daily life (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014).

Wenger (1998b) organizes the learning that takes place in communities of practice into three "modes of belonging" (pp. 173-174). The three modes are *engagement*, *imagination*, and *alignment*. These modes contain the processes that help to shape individual identity and learning within a given community. I briefly review the qualities of these three modes.

Communities of practice have members. *Engagement* requires that members of a community of practice "develop and share the capacity to create and use knowledge" (Wenger,

1998a, p. 1). Members must engage with each other around common issues and for common purposes.

Communities of practice have boundaries that separate one community from another. *Imagination* involves community members crossing the boundaries of their community of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014). Crossing boundaries enables community members to engage with other communities of practice. Members must imagine the world outside their immediate community of practice, and try to consider relevant processes from other places or times (Au, 2002, p. 224).

Communities of practice are a subset in the natural "landscape" of organizations (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014). *Alignment* requires "making sure that our local activities are sufficiently aligned with other processes so that they can be effective beyond our own engagement" (Wenger, 2000, p. 226). Alignment concerns the extent to which a community's efforts are properly aligned with the organization in which they occur (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014).

The three modes of belonging describe how an individual has their identity and learning shaped by a community of practice (Wenger, 1998b). Engagement draws an individual into the community or practice, initiating opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation and forming supportive bonds with others. Imagination enables an individual to leverage knowledge and experience, and to learn more about the world. Alignment allows an individual to feel the satisfaction of successful effort towards some goal. This directly relates to the three-part structure of civic engagement distilled from existing literature, which suggests that students need opportunities to select an issue, research that issue, and propose or take action towards

addressing that issue. I now explore how situated learning theory can apply to understanding civic engagement.

Operationalizing Situated Learning Theory in Research on Civic Engagement

In this section I review an example of operationalizing situated learning theory within the context of researching civic engagement. Explicit theoretical discussion of how engagement happens, how individuals develop civic identity, what research questions are worth asking, or why particular research methods are appropriate are rare. Torney-Purta, Amadeo, and Andolina (2010) offer a framework for guiding research around the development of civic engagement. Their work relies heavily on situated learning theory and communities of practice. Torney-Purta et al adapt and adopt Lave and Wenger's (1991) work through the incorporation of Positive Youth Development. The authors use Positive Youth Development in arguing that to understand whether observation of potential legitimate peripheral participation is actual meaningful learning is to engage directly with the person under observation. The authors suggest a more direct engagement between the researcher and participants.

Torney-Purta et al provide a matrix useful for asking questions about civic engagement experiences. The authors refer to the elements of their matrix as variables. To avoid confusion about the methodology of my own study, I will refer to these as constructs. This terminology is more suitable for the qualitative nature of this study (see Creswell, 2002).

The matrix involves constructs representing areas of interest and interactions within civic engagement experiences (see Table 3-1). The matrix includes constructs built from situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1999). Both theories concern how people learn through social contact. In Table 3-1 I have bolded the constructs that I address most closely.

Table 3-1
A Framework for Generating Research Questions and Appropriate Methods of Assessing Civic Engagement

Dependent Constructs	Independent Constructs		
	Person	***Context***	***Process***
Agency/Efficacy			
Identity			
Meaning			
Practice/Action			

(Torney-Purta, Amadeo, & Andolina, 2010, p. 504)

The authors engage situated learning by considering key components of any community of practice. All of the constructs in the matrix represent interesting and important components of civic engagement experiences within and across communities of practice. In the following two subsections I more closely describe the constructs in the matrix. I will explore the different constructs in turn and explain my criteria for selecting particular constructs as points of focus in this study. The authors suggest that researchers must identify which constructs are of greatest value when examining a given intervention or interrogating a given outcome. Selectivity allows attention to what Campbell-Patton and Campbell (2010) call "methodological appropriateness," matching inquiries with constructs and methods (p. 596). Given the questions guiding this research, the most appropriate constructs are practice/action, meaning, person, context, and process.

Dependent constructs

Dependent constructs in the matrix are meant to capture the results of civic engagement experiences. The experience of any individual member within a community of practice both modifies and is modified by qualities of agency/efficacy, identity, meaning, and practice/action.

These qualities overlap in important ways. A person might develop a sense of efficacy in part because of their identity as a member of one or another community. That sense of efficacy can then determine the types of actions that a person or community will take in a given situation.

In practice I do not ignore any of the constructs because they are so interrelated; however, I deemed two of the constructs, meaning and practice/action, more appropriate for this study. I review each construct, but spend the most time on meaning and practice/action. I argue that the ultimate aim of civic engagement opportunities is to make meaning, generally demonstrated by taking action.

Agency/efficacy focuses on measures of self or civic efficacy. This primarily involves the extent to which people believe their efforts will be successful. Efficacy relates strongly with personal reflections regarding the likelihood of future events. Society wants youth who believe they are capable of meaningful action in the future. The basis for programs like Generation Citizen is a belief that experiences in school will promote a belief in youth that they can succeed in civic endeavors in the future. Concepts related to efficacy emerge as youth grapple with questions about their potential roles in and responsibilities to their communities.

Identity refers to the identity that youth have and that develops as a result of various experiences. Individual identity is crucial to communities of practice (Wenger, 2000), referring both to the specific communities with which an individual identifies (e.g., member of a band) and the role they play within those communities (e.g., lead singer). Schools and intervention programs might try to encourage identity development in various ways. Identity is an important component of existing research on civic engagement interventions, which often seek to promote positive connections between youth and their communities. These connections are often expressed as youth identifying with a community.

Meaning includes the specific knowledge associated with civic engagement. This construct includes but is broader than meaningful pedagogy, which is more concerned with generating learning experiences that hook student interest. Meaning in this framework refers to the knowledge and skill needed to accurately examine and engage with their community. This is what Lave and Wenger call competence. Elements of meaning include knowing the functions and foundations of government, or the skills needed to effectively write an elected official. These components are integral to engagement, particularly as part of an in-school program meant to increase student knowledge and skill. I expect that the knowledge and skill participants possess are closely related to the attitudes they develop as a result of their experience. Lacking key knowledge or skills for the task at hand, participants are unlikely to achieve any goals they set and may therefore develop negative attitudes towards the experience.

Practice/action concerns the choices individuals make with respect to their civic goals. This is distinct from the classroom processes, described below. Practice and action also include the "different opportunities for action in the present and orientations toward action in the future" that youth perceive (Torney-Purta, Amadeo, & Andolina, 2010, p. 506).

The concept of practice/action requires attention to whether planned or completed actions are meaningful. Not all civic actions are suitable for all civic problems. The ability to select and carry through the appropriate sort of action is an important marker of competent civic engagement (Levine, 2007). These choices also relate to the types of associations between people undertaking civic engagement (Putnam, 1995). The different purposes of associations have an important impact on the types of action individuals may select. A person who joins a group to better understand housing costs will likely engage in different actions than a person who

joins a group to protest gentrification in their neighborhood. This demonstration of competence that is at the heart of situated learning theory.

The language describing these constructs overlaps. Each construct impacts and is impacted by the others. Taken together the four constructs described here encourage a thorough investigation of individual and group experiences during civic engagement opportunities. Efficacy and identity are clearly important and connected constructs as well. Efficacy concerns their perceived ability to act on their interpretations of a community, and identity concerns how people conceive of themselves in relation to others in a community. Nevertheless, identity and efficacy are of less concern to me than meaning and practice/action. I am primarily concerned with how people interpret conditions in their communities and the actions that they then choose to take—or not take—based on those interpretations. Focusing on practice/action and meaning constructs allows a narrower attention to the experience of classroom stakeholders during the individual semester program of interest.

Independent constructs

The top row of the table representing the matrix of this framework includes the *je ne sais quoi* of civic engagement. Torney-Purta et al suggest researchers make use of the independent constructs to guide their research. Those constructs are best positioned to guide "research problems and questions" (p. 501) because they concern qualities, participants, and processes of civic engagement experiences. Studies following these constructs should attend to the qualities of the community members (person constructs), the organization in which the community is located (context constructs), and the particular structures forming and framing interactions in that community (process constructs). Person and context constructs played an important role identifying the research site and recruiting participants.

Civic engagement is, above all, about people. After all, engagement requires people. Hence research on civic engagement is primarily research about people. The qualities of those people, often defined according to various demographic characteristics, are of interest to those wondering how differences in those characteristics impact civic engagement. *Person* focuses on using individual characteristics to investigate civic engagement. This includes focusing on the experiences of people of certain ages or ethnicities. I used person constructs to identify schools associated with the civic opportunity gap by focusing on schools serving populations associated with the civic opportunity gap.

All people are members of communities, therefore all civic engagement experiences happen within communities, and these communities provide context for those civic engagement experiences. *Context* relates to qualities of the specific communities of practice where civic engagement experiences take place. These qualities can include whether the context is rural or urban, or if it promotes or prevents open dialogue. Context constructs initially helped my choice to focus on individual classrooms where civic engagement opportunities were expected to take place. Described in my findings, context constructs also played an increasingly important role in how I understood the different experiences of stakeholders in the five classrooms.

Civic engagement is also about things that do or do not happen. In this framework, these things are conceived of as processes. *Process* is often "part of the assumptions on which a study is based" (Torney-Purta, Amadeo, & Andolina, 2010, p. 506), generally treated as the intervention around which research is designed. Civic engagement researchers presume that certain experiences will or will not happen, and then look for evidence to demonstrate impacts. In such research, we conceive of *process* as synonymous with the intervention. I now explain the application of this framework to this study.

Applying Situated Learning Theory to this Study

In this section I describe how I have applied situated learning theory to this study. I conceptualize civic engagement opportunities as a form of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in which the experiences people have in particular communities of practice determine what they learn and think about civic engagement. I accept Torney-Purta et al's suggestion that researchers use the matrix to form "research questions and methodology in research in [civic engagement]" (p. 503). This was a useful exercise that involved reflecting on the different constructs that exist during a given experience and how I might engage those constructs during my research process. As a reminder, the key questions guiding this study are:

- How do teachers' pedagogical practices promote or impede students' engagement in civics issues in five selected classrooms?
- What patterns emerge about factors influencing:
    - Civic engagement levels through interactions in the classroom?
    - Civic engagement actions of teachers and students on specific issues?

Embedded in these questions are concerns for four key components. First, the people involved in the experiences, or civically marginalized youth. Second, the processes those people experience, in this case the Generation Citizen curriculum. Third, their understanding of the meaning they make through those experiences, or what they learn about civic engagement. Fourth, the actions they take through those experiences, or what they do with the knowledge and skill (presumably) resulting from the experience.

By design, the Torney-Purta et al framework uses concepts and findings from across the literature. The authors make sense of existing research using situated learning theory and social cognitive theory. The authors seek a matrix of constructs, each of which contains useful particulars for researchers wanting to investigate civic engagement experiences.

The construct context describes the community of practice in which experiences take place, described in this chapter. Because schools are not isolated environments, the context must also consider the larger educational context, described in chapter two. Torney-Purta et al would add considerations of students' out-of-school experiences, including discussions in the home and family relationships, but those considerations were beyond the scope of this study.

The construct of process describes the interventions or other programs and curricula that provide opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation. Torney-Purta et al focus on processes that promote legitimate peripheral participation, specifically mentioning apprenticeship, scaffolding by adults, and observational learning. I also include other intervention processes described in key literature.

The persons construct describes the people who are and become members of a community of practice. In this study, persons refers to the classroom stakeholders described in chapters one and four. Torney-Purta et al focus on demographic qualities of research participants, inviting researchers to use those qualities both in selecting participants and in asking questions about their experience (e.g., controlling for educational background, what program is most effective at promoting community affiliation among immigrant youth?). The authors also couch the demographic qualities in terms of civic gaps. As a result, I include both demographic and knowledge and skill markers from literature on the civic gaps.

The construct meaning refers to the meaning that participants have and make about issues. This begins with their content knowledge and relevant skill in working with information, and extends to their understanding of local, national, and international issues. Participants must understand where the relevant issue is located, possess the relevant knowledge regarding who is

impacted and key individuals or institutions to target, and the skills to work with information and carry out their plans.

The construct practice/action refers to the actions that people undertake during civic engagement. This is how people put their knowledge and skill into practice, to try and impact their communities. Torney-Purta et al do not specify the purposes behind the actions, instead focusing on the acts themselves. These are the kinds of actions that I anticipated seeing in the classrooms participating in this study.

Aspects of context are used to bound the research by drawing attention to the particular communities in which stakeholders have their experiences. I do not presume that classrooms are the only sites for relevant learning. As this study investigates results of an intervention involving civic issues, I expected that stakeholders would draw upon their participation in other communities as they navigated and negotiated the processes presented by Generation Citizen. Nevertheless, the scope of this study did not focus on direct investigations of stakeholders' experiences in those contexts. I focus on the communities of practice containing the intervention processes, which are the classrooms hosting the Generation Citizen program. I expected to see stakeholders moving from the periphery of civic engagement—what we might well term the low end of the civic engagement gap—towards the center as they make meaning about their issue and gain confidence in taking particular actions to address it. This is the process of legitimate peripheral participation that is so important to situated learning. Movement from the periphery towards the figurative center reinforces positive associations with the community of practice, as the member finds recognition as a valuable contributor. We can explicitly link this movement from periphery to center with experiences such as those presumed to occur during the Generation Citizen curriculum.

Members who are not enabled to move from the periphery may develop negative stances towards that community of practice; perhaps even believing s/he remains on the periphery because of something inherent in him/herself. This is the type of thinking that Carol Dweck (2006) has popularized in her work on mindsets. She explores how people either accept or try to overcome their own expectations for failure or success in certain situations. Those expectations relate to the meanings people form with respect to certain communities of practice. I suggest that a failure to move youth from the periphery of civic engagement via positive experiences during formal schooling is an important contributor to the civic gaps.

As Smith (2003) reminds us, "There is a risk, as Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger acknowledge, of romanticizing communities of practice" (p. 4). Communities of practice are not a solution. Communities of practice are a context in which solutions, such as targeted interventions, may occur. Communities of practice contain the events of situated learning, including legitimate peripheral participation, which enable individual and collective growth.

The notion of communities of practice serves to delineate the context, associated persons, and processes at the heart of this study. Context refers to the locations in which relevant observed interactions occur; that is, the five classes where I conducted the study. Persons refer to the stakeholders in those classrooms; that is, the students, teachers, and Democracy Coaches who act as participants in the study. Process refers to the events that occurred in those classrooms; that is, classroom sessions associated with the Generation Citizen curriculum. This approach to situated learning considers the ways in which people interpret or demonstrate interpretations (take action) based on their experiences (processes) that happen in specific communities of practice (contexts).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I established the conceptual framework guiding the current study. First I reviewed situated learning theory and communities of practice. Second I explored the application of situated learning theory and communities of practice to civic engagement research. Third I explored the application of situated learning theory and communities of practice to this study.

Situated learning theory also connects with findings from existing literature on civic engagement education. Literature suggests a three-step process for promoting effective civic engagement experiences: Students identify, research, and take action on issues that matter to them. The conceptual framework described in this chapter—specifically the constructs highlighted as of greatest interest in this study—follows that pattern using slightly different terminology: Students engage an issue within a community of practice, imagine their potential impact and build meaning, and try to align their actions for maximum effect. In the next chapter I explain the specific methods of data collection and analysis that stem from this framework and the literature on the civic opportunity gap.

IV. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I describe the methods of data collection and analysis employed to investigate my research questions. Existing research into the civic opportunity gap informed the research design presented here. I specifically relate to efforts to address the gap by providing classroom opportunities for civic engagement.

To examine the outcomes of classroom stakeholder experiences with civic engagement opportunities, I collected and analyzed qualitative data as part of a multiple case study (Stake, 2006) in five New York City classes. I generally treat separate classes as separate sites (e.g., distinguishing first and second period at Manhattan High[6]) but those divisions are not always so stark, primarily because some of the classes share a teacher and a school.

This chapter describes my research procedures, relates the process to my framework for conceptualizing civic engagement, and sets up the findings described in chapter five. This study is situated within issues surrounding the civic opportunity gap, such as concerns of unequal power distributions, negative stances of youth towards government, and the restrictions a sanctioned program's curriculum might place on actual civic engagement. In order to get closer to an examination of the innumerable factors involved, tight boundaries were set on the scope of data collection with two specific outcomes.

First, the study was bounded within the specific classes (Stake, 1995). Considerations of broader school and community contexts—though important and impactful—were only explored to the extent that participants introduced them. Second, the qualitative approach to data collection was expansive but not capricious. This type of research can (and did) generate "vast amounts of data" (Evers & van Staa, 2010, p. 750), so selectivity is important. Selectivity also

[6] I use pseudonyms when referring to participants and schools.

stemmed from my framework for conceptualizing civic engagement. As explained in chapter three my framework encourages attention to specific constructs.

The approach to data collection and analysis applied here sought the rich, thick descriptions of qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Investigating participants' experiences required a narrative description over the semester, also consistent with qualitative inquiry (Chimilar, 2010). I undertook data collection with attention to individuals' perceptions of their relationships within a context (whether a class, school, or larger community) and their perceived ability to successfully negotiate such a context (engage in civic action).

Chapter Organization

I organize this chapter into four main sections. In the first section I review the steps involved in collecting data within research sites. In the second section I review my process for analyzing collected data. In the third section I describe the structure of the Generation Citizen program and introduce the human participants in this study. In the fourth section I conclude with my statement on the protection of human subjects, my researcher positionality, and comments on the limitations of my research design.

Research Design

Following purposeful sampling described below, I collected data in five classes across three secondary schools in New York City. Qualitative methodology involved three 20- to 60-minute interviews with each participant, observation of class sessions during the Generation Citizen program, and collection of artifacts from those sessions (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I also maintained a reflexive researcher journal. Collected data relates to participant behaviors (what participants do) and attitudes (how they explain what they do). Given that civic educators do not want engagement to end with the course, the latter is of greater interest.

This research approach was a conscious decision, as Desimone (2009) recommends. This approach was consistent with my conceptual framework. My framework for conceptualizing civic engagement encourages analysis of the relationships between multiple classroom stakeholders by focusing on their knowledge (meaning) and actions. A multifaceted approach follows Wade's (2008) call for "multiple measures of assessment" (p. 119) in civic education research. In the following sections I describe my methods for collecting and analyzing data.

Data Collection

I selected my data collection methods based on an assumption about the process involved in the Generation Citizen curriculum. I expected that certain civic engagement pedagogies and experiences would occur in the classrooms, such as deliberations or studying laws. I based these expectations on my own experiences teaching the Generation Citizen curriculum and working as a consultant on program design and evaluation. I chose research methods that I felt were methodologically appropriate to capturing not just those pedagogies, but the meaning that stakeholders found in the pedagogies. I will now describe the specific data sources, methods of collection, and their relation to the research question(s) and conceptual framework.

Observations

Based on a consistent protocol (Appendix A), observations were focused on identifying and describing classroom experiences and interactions that could be associated with participant ideas about civic engagement. Systematic observations were implemented at minimum as weekly naturalistic classroom observations (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Because GC uses a program of twice-weekly sessions, this spacing maintained contact with each classroom.

This contact was sufficient to maintain a close connection with the work taking place during the meetings while also allowing me to visit all the participating classes. Weekly

observations balanced the ideal version of qualitative research and the realities of such research (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). That caveat in mind, I did strive for greater time with each classroom. I frequently observed both sessions in a class during a given week. I also used regular check-in conversations with teachers and Democracy Coaches (DCs, the volunteer college mentors) to stay abreast of developments in sessions I could not observe.

Using the protocol, observations focused on interactions between and within classroom stakeholder groups, general comments related to civic engagement, and expected examples of civic engagement opportunities such as studying laws. Although all students were included in the observation, focal students[7] received particular attention. For example, when the class broke into small groups I joined a group with one or another focal student. This enabled me to glean specific information for interviews and also to more directly attend to how those students interacted with classmates, teachers, and DCs. Such observations were central to forming any understanding of what these students were experiencing and what might be involved as they translated experiences into understandings and descriptions during subsequent lessons and conversations. I simultaneously collected data via audio recordings. Though the recordings could not capture everything, they enabled a backup to my considerably less panoptic ears.

Weekly observations offered a point of comparison with other data sources, particularly interviews. Mediated by my own interpretation of what was happening in a classroom or with a specific group at any given time, observations afforded chances to see participants' descriptions in action. Observations were also central to the reflexive researcher journal I describe below.

Interviews

[7] "Focal students" refers to those students who consented to participate in interviews.

Repeated interviewing can be a valuable practice in qualitative research (Seidman, 2006). I conducted three semi-structured interviews with each participant throughout the course of the semester (see Appendix B).[8] A series of three interviews helps establish rapport between researcher and participant, and gives sufficient context for meaningful discussions to occur (Seidman, 2006). Following Seidman's suggestion to approach an understanding of participants' ongoing experiences and their "reflections on the meaning" of the experience (p. 18), 20- to 60-minute interviews were held at the outset of the program, during the semester, and at the conclusion of the program.

Interviews attempted to examine participant reactions to classroom methods. Open-ended and direct questions were designed to track participants' experiences in the program, conceptions of civic engagement, and any perceived changes in their attitudes in their own words. Specific questions addressed relationships with other stakeholders, attitudes towards community and school, and perceived progress towards addressing the problem.

I conducted individual interviews with participants from each stakeholder group. Because of their numbers, I conducted more total interviews with students than any other group, but most students were notably less detailed in their responses than other participants. As a result, teachers and DCs generated a larger body of interview data compared with students. The largest body of data regarding students comes from observations of program sessions.

The first semi-structured (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) interview addressed "grand tour" questions (Spradley, 1979). The goal was to open "friendly conversations" (Seidman, 2006, p. 15) about participants' civic engagement "life history" (p. 17) in and out of the classroom. Combined with observations this broad view helped form an initial picture regarding the

[8] One student, Odell, only participated in two interviews, as I explain in the section on participants.

relationship of stakeholders to one another at the outset of the semester and established participants' expectations with regards to the program and their expected role within the experience (e.g., How are students active in their community; What do you think you will get out of this experience?).

Teacher and DC participants were also asked about their teaching experience, their own civic engagement, and their beliefs about their students' civic engagement skills and motivations (e.g., Why do you think this experience might be valuable?). For example, differences in prior teaching experience, and perceived differences in student populations and administrative support were among factors informing teacher and DC attitudes towards this experience.

Focal students, who returned completed consent forms (see the section on student participants below), participated in similar semi-structured interviews. Student interviews addressed their perceived role in the school and community (e.g., What do your friends care about; What voice do you have in your community and school?), the extent to which they perceived interplay between those two experiences (e.g., Do you talk about those things in school?), and their relationships with others in the classroom or school (e.g., Tell me about this school: Do you like it, is it good, what things do teachers focus on?). Questions sought student interpretations of relationships within their community of practice.

The second and third interviews pursued applicable topics from the first set of interviews and continued discussions about classroom events (e.g., Describe your interactions during a GC lesson; Can you describe an example when you wished something had gone differently; How does the project you're working on, or the other work you do in the GC lesson, come out in this or other classes?). Questions were formed during the semester in an attempt to elicit increasingly

focused discussions about participants' experiences by integrating ideas and interactions observed in the classrooms or raised during discussions with other participants.

These interviews also incorporated artifacts to allow for discussion of classroom texts such as worksheets. We occasionally delved into how individual and shared creations related to efforts to address a particular issue or to ideas about their particular school or community. For instance, after students created lists of issues facing them in their schools and communities, I talked with teachers about whether particular issues were surprising or problematic.

Final interviews also focused on participants' experiences with the capstone Civics Day, described below. Participants used that time to reflect on their relative success over the semester; how they associated their projects with their initial goals; how their projects related to those from other classrooms in New York City; and how participants viewed stakeholders from their own classroom following the specific experience of presenting their body of work.

Artifact Collection

Artifacts were collected as they appeared throughout the semester. Considered a "primary data collection method" (Marhsall & Rossman, 2010, p. 179) of qualitative research, collection and analysis of classroom artifacts was meant to help generate a more complete picture of the classroom methods and opportunities participants experienced over the semester. These artifacts provided a record of work done in the classrooms, which allowed me to track changes in participant work across the period of research. For instance, reviewing exit tickets collected across the semester offered an overview of developments regarding how all students in the class described and perceived value in their work. Those changes offered another window into how students made sense of their experiences.

The most significant artifacts were displays made by each class for the city-wide celebration dubbed Civics Day. Civics Day was an opportunity for class representatives to craft and deliver a narrative of the semester experiences and how these different strands of work complemented the effort to improve graduation and college awareness. Civics Day displays included component artifacts, like drafts of letters, from many of the individual GC sessions and new purpose-specific artifacts, like posters, designed to summarize, connect, and present class efforts.

Researcher Journal

Though not a classroom stakeholder, I was implicated in this research. Marshall and Rossman (2011) remind us that qualitative research is a researcher-mediated, emic enterprise (Reagan, 2002). This means that my own experiences, interpretations, and voice would cloud any re-telling of participant experiences. Indeed, conducting this study changed my own conceptions regarding civic engagement and the role of programs like GC in providing civic engagement opportunities. I began with an implicitly outcome-oriented conception, seeming to value the end product over the journey. By maintaining a consistent, though generally un-structured researcher journal, I was able to track my own shifting attitudes towards what I thought I was seeing or hearing in classrooms as related to my often-unspoken expectations. Responding to a broad prompt (What did I see today; What do I think about that?) my researcher journal helped collect my feelings and impressions, with references to literature on the civic opportunity gap (e.g., methods observed) and the guiding theoretical framework (e.g., participant comments regarding context).

And while I was mindful of my own personal and cultural biases lest I ignore the efforts or agency of another (Kupfer, 1996), this awareness was not focused on the (impossible) task of

removing my voice. Angrosino (2005) argues that injecting the researcher voice and self into research can have valuable results. By accepting my complicity in the research and sharing my own shifting impressions with participants, we could work together to untangle and examine another text—in this case, our different interpretations of similar events. The goal of my researcher journal therefore was not to study myself, but to attempt a better study (Bogdan, 2007). Memos often built upon the immediate reflections I made, which I recorded at the end of each session or interview in a separate space. I was often emotional as I left an observation. Students often shared what I thought of as very personal experiences that I tried to make sense of in my journal. Although I did not always consciously use memos as a data analysis tool, this was a way to make sense of what I was seeing and hearing during observations and interviews. I used researcher memos to make immediate notes of what I observed in the sessions.

In the next section I describe the process of analyzing collected data.

Data Analysis

In this section I outline my methods for analyzing data. A timeline of this process is provided in Table 4-1 As described above, I collected a variety of qualitative data, focused on classroom stakeholders during a semester-long program designed to promote civic engagement. I ended up with a mass of data. I transcribed more than 400 pages of interviews, approximately the same amount of observation notes, took hundreds of pictures of student work, and recorded hundreds of hours of audio. I analyzed qualitative data thematically (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). My analysis process was recursive. Borrowing from ethnographic methodologies, I moved "back and forth between inductive analysis—which uses specific items to build more general explanatory statements—and deductive analysis—which applies general explanatory statements to groups of specific items" (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 18).

Table 4-1
Calendar of Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis	2012					2013			2014	
	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan-Apr	May-Aug	Sept-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-May-->
Teacher interviews	X		X		X					
Student interviews		X	X		X					
DC interviews	X		X		X					
Transcriptions		X	X		X					
Observations	X	X	X	X	X					
Artifact collection		X	X	X	X					
Researcher journal	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Recursive analysis	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Coding analysis				X	X	X				
Clustering analysis						X	X			
Generating themes							X	X		
Writing of findings								X	X	
Final presentation										X

Adapted from Marshall and Rossman (2011).

The classes in the study are particular communities of practice. I began analysis by lumping data according to the community of practice that generated the data. Having ordered the data I began coding segments from transcribed interviews and classroom observations.

Coding

In the early stages data collection and analysis overlapped. Analysis began with marginal notations during observations and interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Following the suggestions of Bishop (2010) and others, my observation and interview protocols included a space for me to comment on what I observed and heard. After transcribing recorded classroom sessions and interviews and checking for clarity I began deliberately annotating the transcriptions. In both cases written codes involved me making sense of the data as it was collected.

I strove for inductive analysis to allow patterns to emerge from the data itself, rather than being imposed by my expectations. This early effort at inductive analysis was important because much of the data challenged what I knew and expected of opportunities for civic engagement in schools. For example, I found myself using subjective codes such as “arguing between teachers

and students" when the two parties seemed at each others' throats, something I did not expect to see on a regular basis. In fact, many of the codes that emerged through my reading of the data are negative. These include absent, arriving late, being misjudged, or disengaging from the issue. Other codes emerged from pedagogies generally absent from best practices descriptions of civic education. These include direct instruction, individual work, and motivation for grades.

Of course I could not fully remove what I knew of existing literature, and many concepts informed early coding. For example, Youniss and Yates (1997) and Levine (2007) make reference to personal experience, action, and reflection; Westheimer and Kahne (2004) concern research and inquiry; and Larsen (2006) and Marzano and Kendall (2007) stress motivation. These and other ideas appeared throughout transcripts, and I coded them as such.

Guiding theories and existing research tend towards positive descriptions. For instance, situated learning theory seeks to describe what happens when certain learning occurs. Lave and Wenger do not thoroughly examine what happens when learning does not occur—they believe that all social settings are situations for learning. Torney-Purta et al (2010) attend to the qualities of civic gaps, but form their matrix to aid examinations of positive outcomes during experiences with civic engagement. Similarly, extant literature tends to address positive outcomes from experience with civic engagement. Most authors studying civic engagement interventions want to describe what makes a given program successful or gains that participating students demonstrate. There is less attention to the classroom events that hamper learning experiences, or to negative outcomes that can entrench feelings of powerlessness that the interventions set out to address. Thus the process of inductive and deductive coding allowed a more complete image of interactions and outcomes.

Certain patterns appeared early on. For instance, students often demonstrated substantial resistance to the program during class sessions but were optimistic about the work during our interviews. A similar disconnect appeared between the goals some teachers and Democracy Coaches shared during interviews and the strategies they promoted during class. As these and other patterns clarified through my initial analysis, existing literature and my conceptual framework became more important. As suggested in Maxwell (2004), I consciously returned to literature and theory to try and make sense of what I was finding.

The final list of codes is included in Table 4-2 below. Merging codes from literature and theory happened naturally; there is extensive natural overlap between the literature reviewed and the framework guiding this study. Overlap primarily exists because Torney-Purta et al (2010) base their matrix on existing literature. Overlap also exists because of the sympathetic nature of the language of situated learning theory and research to understand where, how, and why civic engagement does (or does not) happen.

Table 4-2
Codes

- absent
- action
- age
- analytic skills
- apprenticeship
  - working with community
  - working with officials
  - working with school
  - working with students
- arguing between students
- arguing between students, teacher
- arriving late
- being misjudged
- contact officials
- content knowledge
- current events
- DC experience
- direct instruction
- disengaged with issue
- duty-based citizenship
- economics
- educational expectations
- efficacy
- emotional
- engaged citizenship
- ethnicity
- family background
- fear of failure
- fear of losing
- focusing on Civics Day
- gender
- group work
- imagining other communities
  - identifying issues
  - outside research
  - student experience
  - teacher community experience
  - text analysis
  - who is impacted
- individual work
- insulting the DCs
- internal motivation
- international issue
- language barrier
- local issue
- making change
- matters to me
- matters to others
- motivation for change
- motivation for grades
- motivation to win
- national issue
- neighborhood
- open classroom climate
  - deliberation
  - discussion
  - sharing student work
- powerlessness
  - racial barriers
- racial barriers
- preparing documents
- procedural knowledge
- protest
- raise awareness
- reflection
- relationship to authority
- relationship with school
- relationship with teacher
- social media
- stereotypes
- student disinterest
- student problems
- studying laws
- systemic problems
- teacher training
- threats
- volunteering
- voting
- whole class

Several concepts from reviewed literature and my conceptual framework were redundant, meaning that different concepts capture the same idea. For instance, the concepts of commitment (McDonnell & Jackson, 1999), attitudes (American Institutions for Research, 2005; Glenn, 2000; Lieberman & Hoody, 1998), political-moral understanding (Youniss & Yates, 1997), importance (Marzano & Kendall, 2007), and motivation (Larsen, 2006; McIntosh, Berman, & Youniss, 2010) all describe the need for participating students to feel motivated when taking on this work. I chose to use the term intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to participants working on their issues because they found it enjoyable. This can be juxtaposed with the several extrinsic motivation codes (which do not appear in literature or theory) such as ‘motivation for grades’ or ‘motivation to win.’

Literature tends towards three terms to describe the importance of participants' beliefs that they can complete their task: efficacy (Marzano & Kendall, 2007), opportunities for agency (Youniss & Yates, 1997), and performance (American Institutes for Research, 2005; McIntosh, Berman, & Youniss, 2010). Efficacy is the ability to complete a task; in this case narrowed to focus on the belief in an ability to complete the planned effort to address a focus issue. In coding I used the term efficacy, which also appears in the conceptual framework (Torney-Purta et al, 2010).

Social relatedness (Youniss & Yates, 1997), emotional response (Marzano & Kendall, 2007), and collaboration (Metz & Youniss, 2005) refer to the need for participants in civic engagement efforts to seek out work with others based on an understanding that civic issues implicate more than just themselves. Participants identified and cultivated different types of collaboration, based on their understanding of the issue and who would be useful to work with towards addressing the issue. Students needed to be aware of the issue and consider who was impacted. They then worked to identify different groups to work with: community members outside the school, officials outside the school, school officials, or other students. I used those particular approaches to social relatedness / collaboration as distinct codes.

Certain codes in table 4-2 describe what was happening in the classroom, what Torney-Purta et al (2010) call the process. Other codes describe what I interpreted those processes to represent (or, in the case of coded interview data, interpretations participants shared). For instance, the code 'group work' was used to identify points during a session when students engaged in group work. That group work often involved discussions, for instance small groups discussing issues they might like to address. Thus, students were sharing their own experiences, perhaps also describing their neighborhoods. All of these codes relate to what was happening in

the classroom, or the process of the intervention. Those processes represent students imagining other communities. Small group discussions about issues required group members to imagine conditions in other areas as their group mates described something from their experience.

Codes coalesced into categories and ultimately themes as I returned to my conceptual framework and continued to play with the data. Situated learning theory, in particular, suggested that participants might be struggling to reconcile their experiences from a previous community, expectations of this community, and beliefs about another community. The first theme, which concerns positive associations between participants and the sites of the civic engagement efforts, emerged as I realized students were claiming a more central role in their school, bolstered by their existing relationships with teachers and administrators and their own recurring statements about efficacy.

Theory and literature also helped me search for and find more positive aspects of classroom interactions, interviews, and student work. For instance, some data that I had initially coded as “apathy” or “disengagement” was, on reflection of existing literature, more accurately coded as a positive desire for “engaged citizenship.” Participants were not disengaging with the issue or the broader goals of the semester, but were voicing a concern about the specific strategies. This shift in my approach to coding helped develop the second theme explored in chapter five, which concerns a lack of student control regarding chosen strategies.

The third theme emerged as something of an outlier. Many of the optimistic codes prevalent in the first and second theme were absent in data collected from this class. Instead, the data was a mixture of negative ideas students held towards those in power balanced against their own gains in content and procedural knowledge. The codes prevalent in this data suggested that

students perceived intractable barriers between what they wanted and what they felt others would allow.

The pedagogical choices involved in helping students imagine their community of practice in relation to other communities took on greater significance. In my final readings of the data I gave added attention to those pedagogical choices and their implications for how stakeholders described causes of and potential solutions to their issues. I examine the three themes in greater detail in chapter five.

Evernote

One computer program was instrumental in my process, and dramatically impacted my data collection and analysis. Evernote allows the creation and automatic backup of "notes." Throughout this study I used the program interchangeably on my desktop, laptop, tablet, and smartphone. I entered my researcher journal and the majority of my observation and interview notes directly into Evernote, often completing notes on my walks to or from schools, or while riding on the New York City subway. The program supports audio recording within the note, which allowed me to integrate my audio recordings with my typed notes. The program also allows attachments so that I could take pictures of student products and teacher lesson plans and link those with the specific observation notes. Perhaps the most incredible feature involves text recognition within pictures, allowing search and copy/paste of photographs.

Users can also collect and link notes in different ways. All notes from a particular classroom were collected into their own "notebooks," but Evernote also supports "tagging" and hyperlinks between notes. This encourages users to immediately experiment with ways of grouping and arranging notes, which in my case was the same as grouping and arranging data.

Participant Descriptions

In this section I describe the context and participants included in this study. I begin with a review of the Generation Citizen program, which served both as a vehicle for identifying research sites and participants, and the program expected to offer the civic engagement experiences that interest me. I then introduce the research sites and participants included in this study. This includes narrative descriptions for the teachers, students, and Democracy Coaches (DCs) who agreed to participate in the additional interviews mentioned above.

Generation Citizen

As explained in chapter three, process is one of the constructs that interests this study. According to Torney-Purta, Amadeo, and Andolina (2010), process refers to the different methods or strategies that might help promote youth civic engagement. Many different methods might help develop civic engagement. As Parker (2008) observes, a central question facing civic education is "*Which* participatory experiences in combination with study of *what*" (p. 65)?

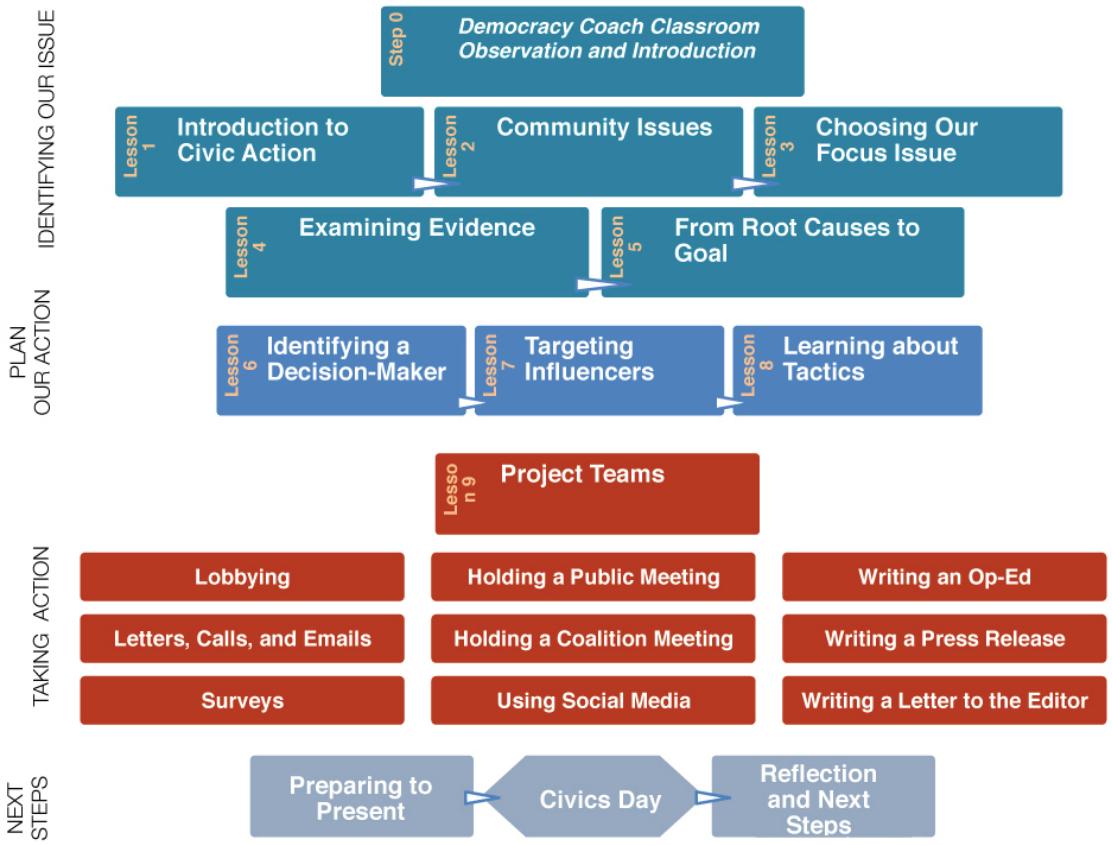
The GC curriculum strives to engage students in selecting a community issue that matters to them, help students educate themselves about the issue's historic and contemporary aspects, and empower students to devise and implement efforts to address the issue (Generation Citizen, 2014). The curriculum stresses that issues be civic in nature and that the classroom work together on one issue. Beyond that, the specifics are largely dependent on stakeholder decisions.

GC targets civically marginalized youth and their schools. The former are the most direct recipients of GC efforts. Direct contact with students is the basis of the GC intervention model. The program tries to amplify what it calls "student investment" by encouraging youth to direct much of their learning within the program. This process encourages youth voice as the fundamental process of promoting civic engagement. At the time of this study, GC worked with over 6,000 students each year, including more than 2,000 in New York City. GC was among the

civic engagement programs generating a considerable amount of student-oriented data using pre- and post-surveys assessing civic knowledge and dispositions. At the time of my study there was little qualitative data on students and no data on the experience of teachers in the program.

GC utilizes a broadly standardized process in the form of suggested curriculum. A visual of the suggested scope and sequence is provided in Figure 4-1 below. This figure introduces the four major units, which themselves consist of 10 overall lessons. Lesson numbers are useful when reading findings as they help situate a vignette within the semester. Despite the name, individual lessons typically involve multiple days of instruction.

Figure 4-1
Generation Citizen Suggested Scope and Sequence



The GC curriculum encourages classrooms to investigate deep social inequalities, which the curriculum generally refers to as 'root causes' of the issues. The GC curriculum also defines 'making change' as the discrete attainable actions that students can begin to implement by the end of the semester. The curriculum provides flexibility so that DCs and teachers are encouraged to adapt their teaching within a particular context. For example, if a teacher believes his or her students are particularly strong in research skills, that class might spend less time on the *examining evidence* stage of the first unit. Despite that flexibility, the classrooms in this study mostly followed the same pacing when implementing the curriculum.

The first unit was the longest. DCs used the first two class sessions to introduce the program. Between four and six class periods were spent reviewing community issues and selecting a focus issue (lessons two and three in Figure 5-1 above). In our second interview Nell described the "difficult" process in the first Manhattan High class:

> It was difficult because kids have their own ideas, and I guess you would say the leaders of the class have their own ideas. And people would side with their idea, but for some reason we still couldn't get one topic down pat. There was one kid in the class was saying we should do drugs, drugs are bad and we should do something. Then a lot of other kids were like 'we should do school culture' and he was just saying 'drugs drugs drugs,' and now we are doing school culture. But everybody was agreeing with him that we should do drugs. But there was so much chaos with everything, like for some reason we couldn't just get one idea down. Every week it changed.

Part of the challenge stemmed from the extensive suggestions students made about issues they faced. For example, students in Brooklyn High 2 listed 70 total issues (see Appendix C) during a carousel activity employed in other classrooms. They identified 27 total school-based issues, including no help with homework, having to pay for second lunch, no toilet paper, and poor student hygiene. They labeled 26 issues in their community, headed by no resources for the

homeless, not curbing dogs, too many teens with guns, and faster police response. Seventeen issues appeared under the "Other/Both" context, including vulgar TV, too many videogames, bird droppings, drug abuse, and drunk driving. Like bullying, some of these issues seem obvious. Others, like too many videogames or a lack of toilet paper, may seem surprising or highly contextualized. Generating the initial lists was the easiest step. Teenagers are generally good at listing things they don't like, and those initial lists were sufficiently consistent across the classrooms that I do not examine them separately. The challenges came as classrooms tried to transition into examining issues and presenting possible action plans.

Examining evidence occupied three class sessions in all but Bronx High, which allocated four sessions. The second Manhattan classroom also used some of this time to cover points from lesson eight *Learning about Tactics*. Lesson five was broken into five class sessions, with the first four focusing on identifying a root cause and the fifth used to specify an ultimate goal for addressing the issue.

Either four or five sessions were spent on the entire second unit, *Plan Our Action*. Most of the focus in that unit was on identifying a decision-maker. Only the first Manhattan class used more than one session to review the different suggested tactics.

Remaining class time, up until Civics Day, was devoted to identifying, forming, and working with project teams. Likened to a History Day presentation, at Civics Day "student representatives will showcase how their work from the Generation Citizen program has effected meaningful community change, and will be called upon to present and defend their projects in front of our guest 'judges.'" (Generation Citizen, 2012). Civics Day serves as the capstone event for the GC program. It is the primary chance for students to demonstrate the work they undertook during the semester, typically by recounting specific actions towards addressing an

issue. Such demonstrations focus on what students learned about their issues and the skills they developed through the process.

Civics Day uses volunteer judges from the community including educators, politicians, and representatives from area non-profits. Judges are provided a rubric (Appendix D) and brief training regarding the purpose of scoring and feedback. The rubric breaks projects into six components. Two of those components, *tactics and action* and *communicating the work* deal with what GC means by "meaningful change." Students are to provide evidence of the actions they have taken. Civics Day judges are encouraged to ask questions both to better understand student projects and to push students to consider new avenues for their work. Unfamiliar with the students, their school, and their work, judges often required additional background information or suggested ideas that students had not considered. Many of the suggested questions ask how students identified a specific action, and whether chosen actions were appropriate to the issues.

Every class but Bronx High also devoted at least one full session to Civics Day preparation. There was limited contact after Civics Day; only DC Naya returned to her class, the second class at Brooklyn High. Other DCs exchanged emails with the teachers or met with me for final interviews but did not have additional contact with their students. I returned to the schools but found no class time devoted to the projects after Civics Day.

Despite similarities in the overall process, classrooms selected different issues and defined different goals for addressing those issues. Students, teachers, and DCs understood their experiences through their own understandings of their communities—what problems were most pressing in those communities; how students related to those problems, systems, and other people in those communities; and what change was possible in the community—each class chose a unique focus issue.

Participant Identification

In this subsection I review my process for identifying study participants. The schools and classrooms in this study were selected specifically because those contexts are aligned with what is known about the civic opportunity gap. Further, each of the classes in this study exists in a variety of similar and dissimilar contexts. I ask questions about how those contexts contribute to participant experiences during the program.

As covered in chapter one, the civic opportunity gap is clearly associated with particular demographic markers. The conceptual framework guiding this study refers to such markers as person constructs. Because GC specifically targets youth matching those demographics, there were a number of potentially suitable research sites. I began with a pool of 38 teachers in the New York City area who were expected to work with GC in the fall of 2012. I used purposeful selection to identify potential participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As Maxwell (2004) notes, the purposeful selection of certain participants, research sites, and experiences is a common theme of qualitative research. Most teachers who partnered with GC taught in schools with marginalized youth; this is part of the program's design.

In late summer 2012, I attended the initial orientation and professional development GC administrative staff runs each semester for teachers partnering with the program. The session is an opportunity for teachers to meet one another, receive pre-surveys for students, walk through the curriculum, and ask general questions. The session opened with a review of the goals GC holds for each semester: "Teach students knowledge skills and dispositions not just about the action civics project from class, but once they leave the school as well."

Four of the nine teachers at the session expressed interest in the study. One of those four worked in a test-in school with person constructs (demographics and college attendance patterns)

that did not meet the literature on the civic opportunity gap. A second teacher's school was logistically impractical as a research site. The third and fourth teachers taught in high schools serving students statistically situated in the civic opportunity and engagement gaps (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). The school neighborhoods also aligned with what is known about the civic engagement gap (Levinson, 2010). GC staff facilitated contact with other prospective teacher participants who had not attended that particular orientation, resulting in the identification of a third teacher in a suitable school. When I identified these teachers, I also identified my research sites. I will detail each of those sites in turn. First I explore important similarities and differences between the three schools.

As mentioned, I was attentive to context constructs. The broad demographics of the three schools, which I refer to as Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Bronx High, suggest students in these schools fall within the civic opportunity gap. The three schools represented in this study provide one layer of context. Each school is located in a different borough of New York City. That physical separation offers an important layer of context. The three schools shared some key context variables but also have important points of distinction. I expected stakeholders in each school would have unique experiences during the program. They were and are unique individuals who brought their own backgrounds and dispositions. Stakeholders also attended schools with distinct differences in terms of school climate and perceived support. The three schools had distinct histories that contributed to different reputations with students, teachers, and the broader community.

Shown in the table below, the three schools share many qualities in terms of student demographics. The markers that are most closely aligned with classroom-based civic engagement opportunities and later civic engagement are non-White ethnicity, low

socioeconomic status, and low real or expected education. The relationship of each factor within the schools is discussed below.

Table 4-3
Research Site Demographics

School	Ethnicity	Free/ Reduced Lunch	4-year Graduation Rate	College Attendance (of graduates)
Brooklyn High	28% H; 43% A; 19% W; 9% B	84 %	63.5%	52%
Manhattan High	44% H; <1% A; <1% W; 55% B	73%	40%	47%
Bronx High	70% H; <1% A; <1% W; 30% B	83%	77%	39.4%

Each of the three schools is majority minority. Each school has a high percentage of poor students, as identified by those receiving free or reduced lunch. Using free and reduced lunch as a "proxy for poverty" presents some challenges at the high school level (Harwell & LeBeau, 2010) but remains a common practice in educational research because such data is not otherwise available for individual schools (New America Foundation, 2013). These figures are common for a large district like New York City. Large urban districts are generally more diverse and have higher percentages of students receiving free and reduced lunch. Overall, 74% of students in New York City received free and reduced lunch in 2012-2013 (New York City Department of Education, 2013a). Approximately 70% of all students in United States public k-12 schools receive free and reduced lunch during the same period (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2014).

Expected or realized education is another important person variable associated with civic engagement. In this study I used graduation rates as a proxy variable. Compared to other schools in New York City, Brooklyn and Bronx High may seem to fare relatively well in terms of graduation rates. New York City reported that 70.8% of students attending high school graduated

after four years (New York City Department of Education, 2013b). Broken down by ethnicity, this number included 59% of Hispanic students, 83% of Asian students, 79% of white students, and 60% of black students. Because this study occurred in 12th grade Participation in Government classes, I was already researching the experience of relatively academically successful students. Although students, teachers, and administrators at each school still consistently worried about making it to graduation, this population was perhaps already more likely to successfully complete high school. Nevertheless, the graduation numbers themselves do not preclude claiming these schools fall within civic opportunity gap.

According to the New York City Department of Education (2013c), "49.7 percent of the class of 2012 enrolled in a two- or four-year college, vocational program, or public service program after graduation." The figures in Table 4-3 relate to college attendance rates of graduates from those schools. Corrected for graduation rates, 33% of Brooklyn High students attended college. That number is 18.8% at Manhattan High and just over 30% for Bronx High. Students from these three schools are attending college at a significantly lower rate than their peers across the city.

The three schools also claim distinct mission statements that suggest different levels of attentiveness to qualities of the civic opportunity gap. The most significant distinctions are whether the mission statements explicitly reference civic education, student demographics, the surrounding community, and/or partnerships with outside entities. For instance, Brooklyn High directly references the social, educational, economic, and cultural diversity of their multicultural population. This seems comparatively more attentive to the particular identities and experiences of their students. Bronx High does not mention qualities of their student population, instead

focusing on the diversity of the surrounding community. This seems comparatively more attentive to the immediate community.

This is not to suggest that every facet of the mission statement is acted on as a priority in the school, or that areas without explicit reference are ignored. But, to the extent that mission statements are meaningful representations of a school's priorities, the distinctions give a snapshot of how the schools position their priorities. During our conversations, students, teachers, and administrators at these schools frequently described conditions and experiences (or lack) consistent with the civic opportunity gap.

Within the five classes across these schools are the three stakeholder groups comprising the research participants. School administrators, other teachers, the broader community, and the researcher are also implicated in the classroom, but are not considered stakeholders in this study. Consideration of these different "systems" of influence (see Brofenbrenner, 1979) was beyond the scope of data collection and analysis.

Table 4-4
Study Participants

School	Teacher	Class	Students	Democracy Coach(es)
Brooklyn	Cara Jacobs	1	Moorie Nino	Grace
		2	Erin Jonah	Naya
Manhattan	Travis Mathers	1	Jane Nell Quarles	Betty Paula
		2	Odell Elvis	Tasha Frances
Bronx	Pablo Tomal	1	Ginny James	Cain Lora

Table 4-4 lists the participants according to their school and classroom. Three teachers agreed to participate in this study: Cara, a teacher from Brooklyn High; Travis from Manhattan High; and Pablo, a teacher at Bronx High. Each teacher was experienced, with more than five years' total teaching and at least four years in their current school. Cara was the only teacher who grew up in her school's neighborhood. Pablo, Cara, and Travis were all teaching Participation in Government, a required course for 12th grade students in New York City, for the first time. While the challenge of teaching a new course was part of the motivation for each teacher to partner with Generation Citizen, they also shared descriptions of the value they hoped their students would receive from the experience.

I recruited student participants from each class. Participation was offered to every student in the class. I initially hoped for three students per class. Teachers recommended some of the students, including Nino, Ginny, and James, because those students were more thoughtful or engaged in class. I also sought out students, including Odell and Moorie, because they were candid during classroom discussions. In total, 14 students agreed to participate in the study and 11 returned signed consent forms. This was below my target of 15 total students but I had no cause to compel participation.

Each student was a first-semester senior enrolled in one of the five Participation in Government classes. All students reported plans to attend college after graduation. They expressed interest in a variety of schools on the east coast from New York to North Carolina, but most students were focused on schools in and around New York City. Only Quarles expressed interest in vocational post-secondary education. Only three students had submitted applications. Through the first semester of their senior year none of the participating students had been accepted.

In addition to classroom teachers and students, this study includes GC "democracy coaches" (DCs) who help implement the civic engagement opportunities. GC assigns Democracy Coaches (DCs) based on scheduling availability. In this respect, the presence of a coach in a given room is largely based on chance. The DCs in this study were enrolled in different colleges, at different points in their college careers, and interested in different majors. Those different backgrounds and future plans played important roles in how coaches navigated the experience of working with teachers and students, and in how they conceived of civic engagement.

DCs participated in bi-weekly or monthly meetings hosted at their respective colleges. These meetings involved discussions about how classes were proceeding, what issues the students were interested in, or what difficulties DCs were encountering. The meetings were led by other DCs, typically ones who had completed the program in prior semesters.

Three of the five classes had two DCs; the two Brooklyn classes were the only ones with single DCs. I conducted all three interviews with six of the eight DCs. I was unable to secure interviews with Grace from the first period class at Brooklyn High and Betty from the second period class at Manhattan High. I include their classroom interactions in the findings, but do not describe their backgrounds or thoughts on their respective classrooms here, as I could not record that information.

In the following subsections I offer profiles of the three schools and each of the key participants within those schools.

Brooklyn High School

Brooklyn High School is located in Brooklyn, the most populous borough of New York City. The comprehensive high school serves approximately 3,200 students in grades 9-12. It is a district school that serves students based on geography, without requiring a special application

process. Though the school is technically a neighborhood school, very few of the students live in the blocks immediately around the sprawling building. Most of the immediate residents send their children to specialized or private schools, a trend that has increased since 2005. Most students who attend Brooklyn High live at least one subway stop away. According to an assistant principal with whom I spoke, the school and neighborhood "cooperate but we don't have a lot in common." The positive relationship extends to the community using school facilities for events, and having provided the school with a "beautiful new field" for their sports teams. During Hurricane Sandy the building was used as an evacuation center and relief station.[9]

Brooklyn High serves a student population closely associated with the civic opportunity gap. The student body at this school includes a high percentage of first and second-generation immigrants for whom English is a new language. In 2012 there were 37 languages spoken at Brooklyn High. Many of the students in the school are recent immigrants, a trend I noticed in person on my first day there. A staff member in the main office was helping process and place three new students, none of whom spoke English or had attended school in the United States before. As one assistant principal told me "a lot of our children are undocumented" placing an added burden on the school's faculty and support staff. The guidance office noted that few of the students "have the space in their schedule to take an elective" so they do what they can to "revamp what they have to take to make it more topical, current, and advanced." Crowded schedules also prevented the school from offering any community service or service learning electives. Because of their family's status, many of these students are also associated with the civic engagement gap, where their home communities do not provide opportunities to practice civic engagement.

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[9] Hurricane Sandy made landfall in New York City in October of 2012, closing many services including the three schools in this study. I consider the impacts of those closures in the limitations section of this chapter.

I usually walked several blocks from the nearby train station with a mass of students arriving at the main doors before the first bell. Volunteers and safety personnel greeted students as they swiped their ID cards. There were no metal detectors or bag screenings. On my first visit to the school, I heard a security guard wish one student a "happy birthday." With no dress code, the most common complaint I heard from staff was for students to keep their cell phones away or remove their hats. Administrators waited just inside a separate door for adults, welcoming their colleagues and visitors.

The school struck me as welcoming and ordered. Limited student work in the halls highlighted long-term projects and research reports. In the social studies wing where I spent most of my time, mockups of Facebook pages for historic figures, wanted posters for "20th Century Dictators" and creative illustrations of prominent quotes from the Founding Fathers dominated the walls. Though these imaginative works were not from the classes I observed, they suggested the school supported long-term focused projects. Although the school presented a traditional view of high school life, the school climate was not outwardly punitive to its students.

Cara Jacobs was in her fifth year as a teacher at Brooklyn High. 2012-2013 was her first year teaching 12th grade Participation in Government, having spent her first four years teaching 9th grade Global History and Geography. Cara attended college in the city where she majored in history and was in "the education certification program there because they didn't have it as a major." After six months filling in for a teacher on medical leave she began a graduate degree in Middle Eastern history, also in the city.

A young white woman, Cara grew up in the area around Brooklyn High, and "went to high school only a few blocks away" but recently moved "about 20 minutes away" and has felt the area around the school changing. Cara was able to specify significant changes in the

neighborhood, particularly in terms of shifting demographics leading to greater diversity. She noted that the neighborhood has "become a lot more diverse. Growing up, this area was a very Italian. Now it's very different. For the better. It's really diverse, which is great. It's a lot more immigrants, I believe." Like the school overall, Cara approached this diversity as a positive.

In order to support those students, Cara tried to offer engaging learning experiences like "doing current events Fridays" to keep them informed "about what's happening right now in the world." Cara shared three reasons for selecting the Generation Citizen program. Because this was her first year teaching Participation in Government, she was hoping for "a really cool program" that could help her with lesson planning. Cara also remembered a lack of civic activities during her own time in school, and wanted "to get [students] more politically active, and to focus on what's going on in the world." Finally, she talked about the Democracy Coaches, and being "excited to help those students coming into my class, in order to make them feel really comfortable, and to enjoy teaching." These reasons for partnering with GC showed Cara's desire to provide a supportive and positive environment in her classroom.

When our conversations turned towards her students, Cara was clearly proud. We talked about the graduation rate climbing since 2006 despite the percentage of students identified as English language learners increasing substantially. Cara credited the improvement to dedicated students that strive for personal improvement over their time in school.

The first class I observed at Brooklyn High met during first period, with GC sessions on Mondays and Wednesdays. There were between 20-25 students in the room. As an inclusion class, meaning there were "general education" and students with Individualized Education Plans, an assistant teacher with additional training in special education was also assigned to the room for every session but did not insert herself in instruction. She appears only twice in my field

notes; both times she helped students pronounce challenging words from a provided text. Most students with Individualized Education Plans were designated as English Language Learners, and received additional support with assignments or tasks involving literacy and speaking.

In addition to observations of whole-class and small group interactions in Cara's first period, I conducted a series of interviews with two students, Moorie and Nino. Moorie was a 17-year old Asian senior quick to point out that she "is not a citizen," a fact that she believed limited her options in talking about citizen actions. Moorie believed "the school is not hard to get good grades in" and was "too lenient" with teachers "letting stuff go or whatever because it's our last year." In addition to school, Moorie worked two part-time jobs in the service industry, making for "a crazy schedule, back and forth between school, work, and home." Moorie recently left the area to move into government housing "about an hour away" in an area she thinks is "really unsafe" for her to spend time in.

Nino was a fast-talking, 17-year old Hispanic senior who lives "a few blocks away" in a "safe neighborhood" where he "never really had any problems." He wore close-cropped hair over a pale but clear face, with a wispy chin beard and close-shaved mustache. Nino was one of the more vocal students in class, which he ascribed to having "more history knowledge than in any other subject." When we spoke, he was quick with all of his answers, and repeated back the questions in his answers in a way that reminded me of a politician, or someone used to being interviewed.

The second class I observed at Brooklyn High School met during second period, with GC classes on Mondays and Wednesdays. There were between 18-24 students in the room. Cara's second period was an honors class with high levels of attendance; as the second period of the day students were rarely late to class. While Cara sometimes had to remind the first period students

that "your work in GC is part of the whole grade for the class," I did not hear those reminders in the second period. She ascribed this to a group of students that was "really pretty driven. I love all my students, but this group is a lot of fun and puts in the effort."

In the second period class at Brooklyn High, I conducted additional interviews with two students, Erin and Jonah. Erin, a 17-year old Hispanic girl, had "been here for four years in the school" and "can't wait to leave" because "it's hard work. It's good work, but I want to get into college. Then start real life." Erin was in the process of applying for colleges, with a specific interest in medicine. Erin was active at school, including tutoring students after school, but was "shocked" when she first heard about the Generation Citizen program, which she described as "actually working towards changing, adding new ideas" in her community. Erin did connect herself closely with the community and the school, noting that she lived "just a couple blocks away" and had some strong ideas about things she might like to see her class address, like littering and "too much noise, like all the time."

Jonah, a soft-spoken 18-year old African American, had been at Brooklyn High all four years. He described it as a "good school, kids are friendly. You know, it's a safe school" but also one he found academically challenging. The challenge was positive, as "school is really important, especially in my family." Jonah lived "in the neighborhood" but walked about 20 minutes to school each day. Though he is "good with numbers" his goal was to become a dentist.

I spoke with the lone DC, Naya, in Cara's second period class at Brooklyn High. Naya described herself as a "white and Hispanic" junior at a private university in New York City, majoring in German and linguistics. Naya's goal after graduation is to "ultimately do something in elementary administration." As part of this goal, GC offered Naya a chance to "sort of get a handle on what it's like to be in control of the classroom" while also working on a beneficial

project. Having moved from the west coast where she attended a private high school, Naya was most interested in the "differences, and there are just so many" between her own experiences and those that other students have. She described GC as getting students involved in "the logistical process" of doing community service, something that she "didn't have to deal with" in her own schooling experiences.

I also interviewed Alana, the director of guidance and outreach, at her request. Alana was responsible for the partnership with GC. She was thin with carefully styled hair and something of a love for the color purple. She held her school in very high regard, and seemed intent on both working to improve it while also defending it from any outside attack. She was excited for the semester because GC "seemed like a fun way to make the participation in government class come to life" for the students at her school.

Manhattan High School

Manhattan High School is located in Manhattan, often considered the central borough of New York City. Approximately 500 students attended Manhattan High in grades 9-12. The comprehensive "small" high school was one of three schools in a five-story building taking up most of one block. The building itself was undergoing heavy restoration, with scaffolding covering the exterior.

One assistant principal with whom I spoke described the "very economically diverse neighborhood" as being pulled in different directions. He talked about how around a nearby express stop, "there's a lot of really nice condos and buildings and doormen and on the same block, two buildings down, there are students who are on free lunch programs and who are getting significant amounts of public assistance." Attendance and, as noted, graduation rates are exceedingly low. Low graduation rates are seen as a composite problem of students "not caring

to come everyday" and having "just gone through poor educational institutions since their upbringing." The school had recently been marked for closure, but was granted an extra year (2012-2013) to meet local and state mandates for improvement. Generation Citizen was one of several "extracurricular and in-class partnerships" made to try and meet those mandates.

There was a clear disconnect between the treatment of students and my own treatment. On every visit a police officer was stationed outside the school, frequently interrogating students or citing them for truancy violations. All visitors entered the school through double doors opening into a small lobby with a security desk tucked off to the side. On my visits the security guard was very cheerful, often greeting me with pleasantries like "any morning I wake up is the best morning there is." A double staircase led from the lobby to the second floor, where the main school office was located.

Noise—whether learning or otherwise—was a constant at Manhattan High. I rarely saw students in the hallways outside passing periods, but could hear conversations coming from every room, even those with closed doors. Student work was limited to the empty space above the lockers lining every hallway. Most of the work was posters from students urging their classmates "No grass—Go To Class!!" or presenting magazine collages of "What REALLY makes a Woman." The work was motivational but not related to any particular course.

Travis Mathers was in his 18th year as a public school teacher. After a stint as a "computer coordinator and language arts teacher for elementary school" in east New York, Travis also taught for brief stints in Philadelphia and Florida. He returned to New York City as a "desperate last measure" after being let go from a position he had held for four years in upstate New York. The fall of 2012 was the start of his 7th year at Manhattan High. Like Cara, this was

his first year teaching 12th grade Participation in Government, having taught sections of global history in his first six years at Manhattan High.

A middle-aged white man, Travis grew up in Long Island, New York. Travis was "the kid who got into trouble a lot. I was not functioning in school most of the time. I guess I use that to empathize with these kids sometimes." Travis "didn't really have positive experiences when I was a student." Now as a teacher and a father of two, he wants to provide more chances for his students and children, but finds it a challenge. His "two kids are in all of these cool clubs…and they're better prepared for the real world." His students, however, are "just getting prepared to be part of the cycle of poverty." Between his home and work life, Travis straddled both sides of the civic opportunity gap. The idea of challenging contexts for his students was a recurrent theme in my conversations with Travis.

The biggest problem for Travis was "the school culture" which he said he has seen declining every year he has taught at Manhattan High. Although some of his students come from as far away as Brooklyn, Travis associated the school culture with a neighborhood where "very little parental backup" lessens the value of an education. He described the school as having a "minority, urban culture" which he thinks presents "school as a low priority" where "they're happy with a D- on their refrigerator." Regular attendance is a constant problem, as "most of the kids are failing, and it's because of attendance." Irregular attendance hampers students' chances to earn "that piece of paper, that diploma, that could actually really help them later in life." Travis openly struggled with his own desire to hold students to higher standards and what he perceived as a climate of low expectations:

> You look at my report card and most of the kids are failing, and it's because of attendance. As idealistic as I used to be with not ever giving upgrades, I sort of started to become that way. Strictly due to pressure, partly due to that I know that

> to hold them back or to fail them is not really going to do any good. I'm even to the point where I'll give a kid a 65 if they'll show up and sit there and copy down.

Having learned of his assignment to teach Participation in Government "at the last minute" Travis partnered with GC when he was "still holding back developing my full curriculum" for the fall. He liked "the idea of getting these kids involved in that, in civic engagement" which could be "something the kids would be really enthusiastic about." Travis has set issue-based projects for his students before, but this was his first time working with a whole-class project.

I collected data in two of Travis' classes at Manhattan High. The first class met during second period, with GC sessions held on Tuesdays and Fridays. Travis described this class as "my least favorite group. They just don't care. They're very apathetic kids for the most part." Inconsistent attendance was the most obvious issue, with daily attendance fluctuating between 5-19 students. Students who were in the room were often actively disengaged, refusing to participate in even basic activities like "trying to get up and get them to move" for group activities. Cliques were very apparent, as students seemed to self-segregate themselves along ethnoracial lines.

In Travis Mathers' first period class, I conducted interviews with three students, Jane, Nell, and Quarles. Jane, an 18-year old African American girl, lived "just four blocks" from Manhattan High in a community that needs "more helping out from folks living there." In her time outside school, Jane volunteered for "cleanup things" with the parks department. She was applying to schools and hoped to moved to North Carolina for college. As we talked about her expectations for the semester, Jane was clear that she wanted to work on something "in my community, something people feel" but not something that impacted her. "Too personal an issue" would be a challenge she had no interest in taking on.

Nell was an energetic 17-year old African American girl with braided hair and strong feelings about her school. As a senior who unwillingly missed class "working on a personal statement for college" she "feels bad" for her fellow students. The attendance issues typified "the atmosphere of this school" where "people don't take this seriously and just don't want to be here." Nell commuted to the school—she rode the train from Brooklyn every day—and was upset at freshmen and others who "will regret" skipping class, but she also doubted that much could be done to change the culture. She hoped that the Generation Citizen program might prompt "a slight improvement" in how people viewed the school.

Quarles, an 18-year old African American boy, was concerned about making up credits he needed for graduation. In part to gain those credits, Quarles was enrolled in the school's community service elective, doing projects like going "to church to serve soups and sandwiches." Quarles was the only student I spoke with interested in vocational school; he was "working to meet requirements" to attend the Culinary Institute of America. Beyond being "tired of getting up in the morning," Quarles had no strong feelings towards Manhattan High. He anticipated Generation Citizen would help him "be more informative about an issue" they might not otherwise study.

Paula was one of two DCs assigned to Travis Mathers' first class at Manhattan High. As mentioned, I could not secure interviews with her partner. Originally from Poland, Paula was a senior in public affairs at a local private college with hopes of joining the Peace Corps after college. She attended an elite "very academic" high school where "field trips were bad because they meant you maybe missed out on class." Paula described collecting "a lot of signatures" on her petition to close Guantanamo Bay—part of her school's community service requirement—and hoped that her GC students would also "learn a lot" from their projects.

The second class I observed at Manhattan High met during third period, with GC sessions on Tuesdays and Fridays. This class had more consistent attendance from the 12-20 students. Like the second period class and the overall school, these students were overwhelmingly Hispanic and African American. There were no noticeable ethnic cliques in this class; instead, certain students had strong influences—both positive and negative. "It all depends on getting them engaged. If that happens, the rest of the class should come along" Travis noted.

In Travis' second period class at Manhattan High, I conducted additional interviews with two students, Elvis and Odell. Elvis, an 18-year old Hispanic boy, transferred to Manhattan High his junior year from a magnet school. He was vocal that his new school "prioritizes uniform over education" and shared experiences "walking the hallways" during class and being corrected for wearing "the wrong pants, or a hat" instead of skipping class. Elvis described himself as a standout student among a group of "children" who rarely "have a higher IQ than a peanut." He tried to participate, both to "help the teachers out" but also to distinguish himself in class. As a student "with just a lot to say, and a few chances to do that around here" Elvis hoped the Generation Citizen program would encourage "enthusiasm" from the other students.

Odell, an 18-year old African American boy, described himself as "argumentative" who wants to "share my opinion" with people but not "change their opinion." Odell was adamant that he was "one of the people graduating from this place" and planned to attend a college in New York to major in business and psychology. He looked at the Generation Citizen program as "all right, like with good intentions to make us aware" of important issues. Despite that, Odell stopped attending the GC sessions between the third and last weeks, and we only conducted two of the three interviews.

I conducted interviews with both DCs assigned to the second class at Manhattan High. Tasha and Frances were both freshmen studying at the same private university. Raised in the Midwest, Tasha hoped to major in philosophy. Working with GC was, for Tasha, a way "to sort of get my feet wet before I did something like a teaching fellowship or Teach for America" after graduation. Reflective and careful with her words, Tasha described attending an elite, competitive high school where she "would have been terrified to do this, standing in front of a class and pretend I know something." In her new university, Tasha experienced "first world problems. One percent problems." She entered the semester excited to try and "find the problems that are actually problems" by working with students who live those problems.

In New York from Venezuela via Florida, Frances was hoping to major in philosophy or political science. Hoping to be a district attorney and "work with disadvantaged young people" Frances saw GC as a way to "get some sense" of what working with such youth was like. She described her understanding of how students at Manhattan High learned civics as "backwards. They talk about, as if they had done something, how would they tackle that issue." Her goal was to give students the chance to think about some real idea or action, and use that to explore the process.

I also interviewed Charles, the expanded learning time coordinator at Manhattan High, at his request. Clean-cut and in his mid-30s, Charles still seemed haggard. Students completing class assignments or graduation requirements often worked in his office. He could rarely complete a sentence without being interrupted by a student or colleague needing help with something. He described GC as "part of the expanded learning umbrella. It is a program that brings in some type of classroom enrichment." Charles observed several GC sessions, and I include some of his thoughts in chapter five.

Bronx High School

Bronx High School was the smallest of the three research sites. In 2012-2013 the comprehensive high school enrolled approximately 350 students in grades 9-12. The school predominantly serves students living in surrounding neighborhoods, which comprise one of the poorest Congressional districts in the United States. The school shares a large historic building with five other schools, part of the recent "small schools" movement in New York City.

Bronx High's student population has shifted with the surrounding neighborhood. Brass plaques list students from the 1950s and 60s with Jewish and eastern European surnames. No plaques document the current population, but like the surrounding neighborhoods, Bronx High today is largely Hispanic, with a sizable population of African American students.

Students and visitors enter the building through a series of large brass-and-glass doors. The metal detectors and airport-style x-ray machines immediately inside reinforce the sense of entering a city hall or historic courthouse, but also highlight fears of student violence. On several occasions I waited with a line of students as we passed through the single metal detector. Security is a response to the building's "history of violence" that culminated in the 1990s when a student killed a teacher. Memories of that event continue to strain community relations. According to one assistant principal, "those who can tend to send their kids elsewhere."

Teachers, students, and staff were open about the building's difficult past. They talked about "how bad it used to be" and how recent efforts might "break that cycle, get things moving positively." Teachers were active in the hallways, encouraging students with standards like "get to class" but also joking with them about extracurricular activities or asking about family members. The new partnership with Generation Citizen was one part of their effort.

Administrators hoped that "we can get students taking more of a stake in making things better" inside the school and out.

Pablo Tomal was beginning his fifth year at Bronx High School. Pablo had taught some of his students when they were in 9th grade, but this was his first year teaching 12th grade Participation in Government. He also taught one section of Advanced Placement American government, a recent offering at the school. Pablo was excited to teach the classes because as "a political science major, in terms of content this is what I lean towards." He moved to New York City from the Midwest and, having completed his masters in teacher education, was currently enrolled in a doctoral program at a college of teacher education.

A young white man, Pablo saw similarities between his "old steel mill town where there were no more steel mills" and his current students' communities, which face "crippling poverty that challenges them on a daily basis." Pablo felt that his students lacked a "say" in their communities, and "felt trapped a lot of ways by the community." The best chance Bronx High students had to reach "the goal of just going away" was through a college education. Pablo felt drawn to "working with this challenging population, I love it. There's nothing I'd rather be doing because it adds value" there in a way that he could not at more traditionally successful schools. Pablo wanted to humanize his students, which he contrasted with a sort of professional preparation associated with traditional education and standards-based teaching.

Developing relationships with students, families, and other teachers was central to Pablo's thinking of how to support his students. Just a few years ago, "kids would just get up and walk out of class. Tell teachers to go F themselves, and lot of the problems you think of in the movies with urban school." But by developing individual relationships and creating a supportive learning environment, Pablo saw evidence that students felt "this is their school and that they can

change it and make it better." The partnership with Generation Citizen was one effort to help encourage that feeling.

Pablo was also excited to "serve as a mentor to the GC coaches" whom he described as excited college students that would help motivate his seniors. Considering a reciprocal process, Pablo was hoping to "get back to" values of "collaboration, group work" by co-teaching sessions with the DCs. He looked at their experience as akin to student teachers, who might help him further create a beneficial learning community in his classroom.

I collected data in one of Pablo's classes.[10] The class met during fourth period on Wednesdays and Fridays. Typically 8-14 students attended the sessions. Students did not segregate themselves but there were clear distinctions between native and non-native English speakers. Students were generally boisterous and verbally engaged, qualities that Pablo tried to cultivate through his own active demeanor.

In addition to observations of whole-class and small group interactions in Pablo's class at Bronx High, I conducted a series of interviews with two students, Ginny and James. Ginny, a 17-year old Hispanic girl, noted a significant change in her attitude towards Bronx High. As a younger student, she was only motivated to come to school on "half-days every Friday, and then Tuesday" and was frequently absent. Working closely with teachers—particularly Pablo—helped convince her that "oh I'm here to learn" but that feeling waned somewhat entering her senior year, as she described a growing indifference towards the school. Ginny lived in the neighborhood around Bronx High but hoped to "maybe be a lawyer" and move to Florida for "fewer people and the peace and quiet." During the semester, she shared that a relative was killed

[10] Like the other teachers in this study, Pablo partnered with GC in more than one class period. Unlike the other teachers, scheduling issues prevented me from conducting data collection in another class. Hence, only one of the two Bronx High classes is represented in this study.

in a controversial police shooting, effectively ending any other positive associations she had with the area. She did not share this event or her attitudes during the GC sessions I observed.

James, a Hispanic boy about to turn 17, transferred to Bronx High as a sophomore for "the more positive environment." In his neighborhood near the school, James saw "a lot of fights, you know, that's the bad things. The good thing is in the morning it's peaceful and stuff" before everyone is out for the day. A musician who played "drums, guitar, bass, keys, and brass instruments" James' favorite class was math. He talked about how math class, like music, dealt with definitive variables. Turning to his expectations for Generation Citizen, James expected to "learn different ways to attack an issue" by identifying those key variables.

I conducted interviews with both DCs assigned to Pablo Tomal's class at Bronx High. Cain and Lora were students at different universities who had never met before the semester began. Cain was a freshman planning to major in sustainable development and/or economics. Originally from Canada, Cain attended "a very competitive" high school in Shanghai, where both his parents "were successful" in the community. His parents taught him it was "important to interact with the community at all different levels." Cain "would have wanted it for myself if I needed help" and approached the semester at Bronx High as a chance to "give back" to his new community.

Lora was a senior majoring in economics. She hoped to be a "budget analyst or along those lines" after graduation. Lora began the semester please with the students, who were "so much more prepared and focused" than she feared, a quality she attributed to Pablo's teaching. Lora described her interest in GC as having "always wanted to make a difference—not as a teacher, never a teacher—but something with helping students to learn something." She reflected that experiences working on community issues was "missing from my education" and hoped that

the semester would help students learn "that they have a voice and can do something about" things they don't like.

Statement on Protection of Human Subjects in Research

This study followed the guidelines set down by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Teachers College, Columbia University and of the New York City Department of Education (DoE). IRB review is an important step for any researcher working in the social sciences. The goal of IRB requirements is to ensure the protection of human participants in research and maintain their confidentiality with regard to public or published findings. Because this study included minors in schools as participants, IRB clearance was also required from the DoE.

I strove to ensure the confidentiality of all participants by removing identifying information from collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I replaced original names and locations with pseudonyms. I also removed identifying information from any physical artifacts.

Researcher Positionality

As the researcher, I must acknowledge my "place and position of power, while recognizing how [my] past can shape the ways in which [I represent] the world of another" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 24). The language of studies of marginalized groups may often seem pejorative or exclusionary. The very nature of a "gap" serves to position individuals and groups in a hierarchy or along a spectrum. We might wonder whether such a hierarchy is culturally exclusionary, valuing a nominally white, western view of civics and citizenship over other forms of associational living such as religious affiliation. This tension exists throughout this dissertation, and I offer no easy answer. For instance, I believe, and others have demonstrated, that traditional engagement like contacting government officials often seems more effective in terms of having one's interests represented. Levine (2014) details civic successes

achieved by putting elected and appointed officials into direct, deliberative contact with their constituents. It is also true that people are more likely to contact their government when they believe their interests are already represented. Such representation includes racial (do officials look like me?), economic (do officials understand my living conditions?), or historic (has the government seemed to care about people like me in the past?) concerns. Further, such traditional forms of engagement are not the only forms with value. There is power in deliberative dialog between diverse citizen groups, a format that is supported in older works such as McCoy and Scully (2002) and was integral to the progressive movements of the early 20th century, the New Deal, Great Society, and the current civic renewal (Levine, 2014).

Contributing to the hierarchy of a "gap," researchers may also privilege traditional forms of engagement while not consistently acknowledging "that youth from low resource communities do contribute in significant ways," such as providing for family members, that may not be recognized in normative discussions of civic participation (Spencer, 2011, p. 66). I agree with Malin (2011) that all youth "have political and civic interests, and nascent desire to contribute in positive ways to society" (p. 114). I believe those interests and desires can be better cultivated through classroom opportunities. There is a danger in this research of ignoring real and legitimate civic contributions, such as when instruction limits participant choices. Annette Lareau's work is an excellent reminder of the distinctions that can and do exist between the home and the school. Educators and researchers need to be mindful of how experiences in schools can better support what students know of the world from their time outside school.

To lessen the challenge posed by traditionalist views of engagement as a specific form of action, we can also think in terms of skills. Judith Torney-Purta and her colleagues have frequently suggested that opportunities for traditional civic engagement in school are important

because they build valuable skills. Those skills include information gathering and synthesis, and decision-making. Such skills are necessary regardless of the actual engagement actions involved.

As I collected and analyzed data, I tried to acknowledge my position as an upper/middle class, white male who has had access to private and high levels of education. As a result of my identity and my past experiences, civic engagement has always been expected of me and easy to initiate. I have never experienced limits on my voice or legal action. Indeed, I represent what much of the civic engagement literature works against, based on adaptations of Freire's (1970) description of civic oppressors.

Entering these schools and the neighborhood that housed them, it was immediately apparent that I was an outsider. In addition to the usual outsider status of qualitative researchers, some students alternately associated me with the government, the board of education, or GC. Many students were understandably wary of my presence. I was a stranger who received special treatment from school officials, there to talk with students about a program that was not part of the normal curriculum. On several occasions it was clear that comments about racism were meant specifically for me. Other times students threatened me if they thought I was specifically taking notes about them. Many students in the classes were also very welcoming. At different points I received impromptu student-led tours at each school. When I ate lunch in the area, I often ended up chatting with students from the classes about where I was from or what college was like.

I strove for awareness of the differences between my own experiences and those of the students in this study, who may have been experiencing their first opportunity for supported civic engagement. This primarily played out as students discussed the fundamental impacts of inequality and racism on their daily lives. I had no comparable experiences of my own to draw

on when considering those points. At times I would seek out a side conversation with a student about their experience, trying to clarify what experiences they were describing and how they perceived those. At other points I had to revisit literature on culturally relevant pedagogy and the experience of minorities in public education (e.g., Banks & Nguyen, 2008; Epstein, 2009).

I was open with students, teachers, and DCs about my reasons for entering their classrooms and observing their interactions. Several students approached me directly at times throughout the semester, asking what I thought of what they were doing. At points the students seemed to view me as alternately an unwanted interloper and as an expert that could give guidance during their sometimes-difficult conversations. As a rule I tried to answer all questions and requests as honestly as possible. At times this required putting down my notebook and joining the students in their work. For example, I helped the students in the second Brooklyn High class craft their petition, including lending them my tablet to create their document.

I was also aware of my connections to the GC program. I served as a curriculum and evaluations consultant with GC for three of the organization's first four years. I taught the curriculum in New York City classrooms and conducted qualitative and quantitative evaluations of the program in other classrooms. I believed, and have argued elsewhere (Pope, Stolte, & Cohen, 2011), that participating in GC can correlate with measurable and describable gains in student civic knowledge, skills, and motivation. I began this particular study with a stake in the success of this program.

I tried to subsume what were often strong attachments to the GC curriculum and its preferred methods. During the process, I often found myself searching for benefits from the program. Through reflections and conversations with colleagues I was able to acknowledge the significant shortcomings of the GC model. This would not have been possible without a

beginning awareness of how my existing relationship could cloud my own experience. I strove for transparency not simply in writing my findings, but in conversations with participants. In this way, I hoped to use their experiences to help keep me grounded in offering as accurate a representation as possible. In the end I became more critical of the specific approach that GC takes in the classroom.

Limitations/Generalizability

This study shares many of the limitations associated with qualitative research generally (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) and civic engagement research specifically (see Hollander & Burack, 2008). These limitations include small sample size, a brief research period, and no follow-up component. The generalizability of qualitative studies often comes into question. This limited generalizability is mitigated by increased validity within the study itself, a process of the rich thick description offered by data sources (Creswell & Miller, 2000), triangulation (Cho & Trent, 2006), and participant-checking (Fine & Weis, 1999). Nevertheless, this study is expected to have limited generalizability beyond the specific research context.

This study also lacks controls. Following the suggestions of situated learning theory regarding overlapping communities of practice, I cannot claim that any observed civic engagement opportunities are solely responsible for any stakeholder conceptions of civic engagement. However, similar to teacher development reported in Mirra and Morrell (2011), I expected being able to demonstrate that these stakeholders "participate differently in [their] learning community" and perhaps how "participation has altered their sense of themselves […] as civic agents" (p. 418). Studies involving more controlled circumstances (e.g., including classrooms not offering focused civic engagement opportunities) may be able to address such limitations.

In addition to these methodological limitations, this study is limited by factors outside anyone's control. In October, 2012, Hurricane Sandy made landfall in and around New York City. All public schools, including the schools in this study, closed for a period of at least one week. Many of the students and DCs were unable to travel to school for longer periods because of limited public transportation. During and after the storm, Brooklyn High also acted as an emergency community shelter. That school was closed for two and one half weeks, which translated to five GC sessions. Because of this natural disaster, the curriculum was necessarily shortened in unforeseen ways. It is therefore possible that findings from this study are biased because of lost instructional time.

Chapter Summary

This multiple case study involved collection and analysis of data from observations, interviews, classroom artifacts, and a researcher journal. The choice of research sites and participants was made deliberately in keeping with the goals of understanding opportunities for civic engagement in schools associated with civic gaps. Narrative descriptions of the research sites and participants allow some sense of the complex places and people involved in this research. That complexity is only increased by my own researcher positionality and the limitations inherent in a multiple case study approach. I now turn my attention to reporting the findings that emerged from data analysis.

V. FINDINGS

In this chapter I present evidence of my key finding: Legitimate peripheral participation depended on stakeholders who engaged with the deep social inequalities contributing to their focus issue and then put their knowledge into practice through actions they felt aligned with the locus of that issue. In this study all the teachers and Democracy Coaches (DCs) tried to provide students opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation. The structure of those opportunities varied, as did students' responses. The pedagogical processes within the Generation Citizen sessions, mediated by stakeholders' expectations, prior experiences, and identities relative to these and other communities of practice, opened or closed opportunities for engagement and alignment.

Engagement and alignment are key components of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Introduced in chapter three, legitimate peripheral participation describes a process, similar to apprenticeship, whereby new members in a community of practice learn by working with those who have more experience. Through legitimate peripheral participation, members of a community of practice engage together around a shared goal, define competence with regards to that goal, and learn ways to align their efforts with other communities of practice.

Engagement and alignment involved the meaning that students had of their issue and the actions they wanted to take. Beneath this, stakeholders were examining what they knew of their issue and what they felt they were capable of achieving in a given community. Many stakeholders described achievement in terms of what a given community would allow or respond to. Stakeholders invoked their identities as insiders or outsiders with respect to certain communities, and whether they felt supported in the community they wished to impact, which I call the locus of the issue.

Key moments of legitimate peripheral participation occurred when the curriculum process prompted new considerations. The choices participants made and the ways they reflected on and discussed those choices represented their attitudes towards particular experiences and overall civic engagement. Generation Citizen is based on assumptions of transference, specifically that experiences in school will translate to experiences, attitudes, and actions outside school or after schooling has ended. Though never stated in curriculum or program documents, transference describes one outcome of legitimate peripheral participation. As such, the program and this study presume some level of connection between the particular experiences during this semester of civic engagement and overall attitudes towards civic engagement generally.

Legitimate peripheral participation manifested in three themes. First, the shift from reviewing root causes to considering specific actions was evident. Teachers and DCs supported structured control of decisions by informed students. Student control and leadership during discussions of issue causes and potential actions prompted the move from the periphery towards the center. This transition enabled students and other stakeholders to draw clear connections between the root cause and their actions within the locus of the issue. This approach was apparent in both Brooklyn High classes.

Second, teachers and DCs controlled most of the meaning- and decision-making. They imposed decisions on their classrooms in ways that disproportionately focused on root causes or particular actions. A lack of student leadership, whether the result of teacher control or student disinterest, hampered students' ability to draw clear connections between the root causes of the issue and their actions. Participants struggled to move from the periphery of their issue. This trend was apparent in Bronx High and the first Manhattan High class.

Finally, in the third theme, legitimate skills stakeholders developed during the Generation Citizen program were delegitimized by stakeholder experiences in other communities. Stakeholders demonstrated engagement with the issue and described a strong connection between root causes and specific actions. Yet these stakeholders still rejected the notion that they could align their efforts with a larger community. They leveraged personal experiences to describe clear distinctions between their interests and the interests of relevant decision makers. Legitimate peripheral participation was insufficient to overcome the existing barriers that stakeholders perceived between themselves and those in power. This disconnect was apparent in the second Manhattan High class.

To aid in reading this chapter, I provide an overview of the focus issue that each classroom selected, the stated goal for addressing that issue, and the stated action the classroom identified as most likely to achieve their goal (see Table 5-1).

Table 5-1
Issues Chosen in Participating Classrooms

Classroom	Focus Issue	Stated Goal	Stated Action
Brooklyn High 1	Teen Pregnancy	Raise awareness about negative impacts and safe sex	Provide informational services via social media and in-person meetings
Brooklyn High 2	College Awareness	Alter school's delivery of college information	Present revised college counseling plan to administration; aid in implementation
Manhattan High 1	Hurricane Sandy relief	Providing relief aid	Survey school regarding how much aid was needed; gather food and clothing
Manhattan High 2	Graduation Rates	Boosting graduation rates through greater test preparation	Survey classmates; Petition administration and NYC Board of Education for increased test preparation
Bronx High	Teen Unemployment	Increase teen employment in NYC and beyond	Send letters to elected officials requesting teen employment assistance

In the next three sections, I explore events that led the students, teachers, and DCs to these different points. I consider the ways that stakeholders filtered their understanding of important issues to ask the fundamental questions: What causes this issue, and What can we do about it? I ultimately use these three themes to make suggestions about civic engagement pedagogy and research. The extent to which certain data is used within each theme varies. As Evers and van Staa (2010) suggest, variation is a practical outcome of choosing the most illustrative examples from a large body of collected data while also recognizing that different participants produced data, and therefore meaning, in different ways. Variation is also a result of the uneven data generated by different participant groups, which I explained in chapter four. I begin with the first theme. This focuses on stakeholder experiences in the two Brooklyn High classes.

Theme 1: Finding Alignment Between Causes, Action, and Community

In two Brooklyn High School classes, legitimate peripheral participation occurred as stakeholders made clear connections between the root causes of focus issues and specific actions the class could take towards addressing some aspect of the issue. Stakeholders, and particularly students, began on the periphery (e.g., a student matriculating through the school, impacted by decisions from teachers or administrators). They moved towards the center (e.g., a community member whose ideas can guide decisions) as they developed meaning and actions they and others believed could help define competence within the locus of their issue. Stakeholders felt the meaning they made about their issues and the actions they wanted to take were legitimized within a supportive context.

Stakeholders in these classrooms initially identified their issues in many different communities, from the neighborhood to the international. Background knowledge and research

helped provide a working understanding of the issue and explored some of the pernicious causes contributing to the issue. Stakeholders then considered specific actions they felt were tied to the root causes of the issues. But they determined to focus their efforts in a more immediate, accessible context. They primarily chose to leverage resources in their school.

This choice matters because stakeholders were seeking actions that could make an impact towards addressing the issue. They did not want *just any* action, as particular actions could not have a meaningful impact. They sought to align specific actions with and within a relevant, accessible context. The students, teacher Cara, and the DCs engaged deep causes of their issue, then focused on applying their knowledge towards actions they felt could reasonably impact one or more of those causes. The examples in this theme begin during the classroom discussions when stakeholders made these important decisions. I begin with an example from the first Brooklyn High classroom.

Relating to Student Understanding: Excerpt from Brooklyn High 1

Stakeholders opened their study of teen pregnancy with concerns of unequal opportunities and social supports. In the examples below the class decides to focus on a perceived contributing factor, self esteem, that related to their own understanding of the issue. The decision was drawn out through an activity asking students to analyze familiar songs. The activity helped students conceive of relationships between root causes and specific actions individuals can take when placed in difficult circumstances. Those actions are how individuals demonstrate competence.

Through guided discussion and research, students considered different root causes of teen pregnancy that they wanted to address. The class had already explored various causes of teen pregnancy, and burdens that pregnancy places on teen mothers and the child after birth. They

were ambivalent about addressing unequal social supports like education or "chances to talk with doctors" because those seemed so broad. They noted challenges of being raised by "someone who probably can't even get a good job," like drug use, unemployment or "being a burden on everyone." In the examples that follow, the class searched for more accessible aspects of similarly large problems.

In their 9th session at Brooklyn High, DC Grace[11] built a lesson around the songs *99 Problems* by Jay-Z and *Lost Ones* by J. Cole. She hoped the songs would give structure to the students' discussion about "root causes." Students examined the causes of the problems both rappers identify. This helped set up a similar discussion about teen pregnancy, the focus issue chosen the previous week.

99 Problems was unrelated to the chosen focus issue of teen pregnancy, but offered an excellent entrée to thinking about root causes. *Lost Ones* built on that through lyrics directly addressing unprotected sex and unplanned pregnancy. Using two familiar, popular songs helped DC Grace and teacher Cara leverage students' ways of making meaning during an otherwise abstract discussion of "root causes." The process seemed to help students step back from the emotional content of the issues to discuss them more objectively, as issues with potential solutions.

The medium was engaging and the issues resonated with students who predominately identified themselves as similar to Jay-Z and J. Cole. Both rappers are minorities who frequently invoke the struggles minorities, the poor, and others face in daily life. Importantly, both rappers

[11] Because there are many participants with different roles across different classrooms and different schools, pseudonyms become confusing. I have employed a standard reference system. I refer to teachers as teacher, as in teacher Cara. I refer to Democracy Coaches as DC, as in DC Grace. I refer to students using their name, as in Moorie. I hope that this reduces confusion about which participant plays which role in the program. Readers may benefit from reviewing the names and roles of the different participants in each room (Table 4-6).

are also known for presenting themselves as thoughtful and hard-working. They present an image of overcoming systemic inequality and personal challenges through their own actions.

99 Problems tells about some of the problems Jay-Z faces in his daily life. The class focused on a verse about getting pulled over by a police officer, a familiar experience to these students. This verse exists at the intersections between context, identity, and action. Jay-Z believes the officer makes presumptions about identity based on what Jay-Z is doing in a certain context. In doing this, the officer pulls Jay-Z into a situation where the law defines competence. Jay-Z is able to take specific actions that force the officer to acknowledge his legitimate right to equal treatment and protection.

> Grace: Take one more minute and write down why Jay-Z thinks he got pulled over…. Who has a reason?
> Student 1: He was being pulled over because...basically his skin color and age. He's young and black.
> Student 2: People are stereotyping him.
> Grace: What does that say about the police officer?
> Student 3: That he's a racist.
> Student 1: He basically thinks Jay-Z is a young black person and probably has, like he's got weed in the back of his car, or that he stole the car.
> Student 4: It could also have been that the police officer thinks he's like any other black person. Just that he believes he's black and wears his hat a certain way that he pulled him over.
> Grace: A lot of stereotypes, right? What's another stereotype that's pretty big?
> Student 5: About the guns? That there could be guns or drugs because a lot of black...
> Student 1: Guns. Refers to the k-9...the cop says 'do you have a weapon? I know a lot of you do.'
> Grace: What does he do to keep the cop from going through his stuff?
> Student 3: He knows his rights.

Students were adept at identifying issues with deep and pervasive social causes, such as racism. Racism is the clear message of this portion of the song. The students interpreted the meaning of the song through their own experiences or impressions of the police force and other relationships with those in power. But using a shared text meant students could discuss these issues without relying solely on their own experiences. They were developing a shared meaning. Students read the music through their own lenses, based on their backgrounds and identities, but kept their analysis tied to what Jay-Z describes.

Their conversation shifted from the reason Jay-Z was pulled over (the root cause or meaning of the event) to what he did about it (his actions). Jay-Z describes in detail how he stood up to the officer, turning the law from a source of oppression into protection and support. Students talked about how Jay-Z was able to tell the officer he would need a warrant to search closed parts of his car, that "his papers were legit, so there was nothing wrong going on." Jay-Z recognized that he was unjustly targeted but did not adopt a stance of victimization. He was confident in the cause of this event and clear in the actions he took.

Through his own knowledge Jay-Z takes actions that show his understanding of the law. Doing this means the officer in this song could not treat Jay-Z as marginalized, as existing on the periphery and therefore open to persecution. Jay-Z forces the officer to recognize his legitimate claim to his own identity (young and black) and right to engage in actions (operate a vehicle).

The verse obviously deals with perceptions of what it means to be a young black man, how others would view Jay-Z, and how Jay-Z views himself. Like Jay-Z, the students refused to focus on victimization. Instead, they took the excerpt as evidence of both racism and the ways that people can respond to instances of racism. They found evidence of alignment—information on what actions to take in a given situation—through the song.

To bring their conversation back to the main issue of teen pregnancy, stakeholders listened to *Lost Ones*, recorded by rapper J. Cole in 2008. The song talks about a young couple's struggle over an unplanned pregnancy. The song only features J. Cole's voice. At no point does the female character actually sing; hers is a perspective taken by J-Cole. Nevertheless, students associated that presentation with the actual thoughts a young woman might have in this situation; the presentation feels authentic and resonated with students' own understanding of the experience. Cole switches between the male and female perspectives in the song, evoking the powerful emotions that might go into a discussion about abortion. The students were excited to listen to this song, calling out "Miss, that's my favorite song; yeah!; Awww, I love that one." For her part, teacher Cara shared that "I must be really old, I haven't heard of any of these."

A girl in the front of the room closed her eyes to swing her head back and forth. As the song ended, students wanted to see the video on YouTube. One student asked Cara, "What you think about it Miss?" Cara answered, "This song? I have very strong opinions about this song" but did not elaborate, keeping with her goal of not sharing personal opinions. Her response was meant to maintain the open discussion space for students to voice their opinions with minimal interference, demonstrating that students were responsible for the work being done.

Where *99 Problems* demonstrated that people show competence to others through specific actions, *Lost Ones* offers no such suggestion. J. Cole ends his song unresolved. There is no clear action taken by the couple relative to their unplanned pregnancy. Listeners do not know whether the woman in the song chooses to abort the pregnancy or keep the child, or if J. Cole has decided to help raise the child. Rather than focusing on the actions taken (or not taken) the class analyzed this song as representing root causes of teen pregnancy:

> DC Grace: So with our definition in mind, what do we think was the root cause of this pregnancy?

Student 1: They had sex

Student 2: They had unprotected sex

Student 3: She says it, “hit it raw”

Student 4: Shouldn’t let that happen

Student 2: Makes you wonder what she was thinking

Student 5: She thought he loved her

Student 1: Got fooled. Like he was just saying whatever

Student 6: That’s what boys do

DC Grace: Back to the song. Why do you we think she got fooled?

Student 3: She wasn’t thinking about what would be the thing that happens. She just kind of did it because they wanted it, but neither of them thought about what could happen

Student 5: What I said, she thought he loved her and wanted to make him happy

Student 7: She sounds so confident in the song, but I think that she was probably scared and wanted someone who could help her feel safe

Student 3: Like she wasn’t sure she could say no

DC Grace: [With the bell ringing] Maybe we should plan to look at self esteem more.

The structure of this lesson helped students build to the point that they could hold this rich discussion of root causes. “Unprotected sex” is of course a cause of teen pregnancy, but with the emotion J. Cole adds through the song, students immediately question why the woman would make such a mistake. But they do not lay the blame entirely on her, as the “boy” did the expected thing and “fooled her” to get sex. In their considerations of what motivates people to fool others or be fooled themselves, the students were exploring root causes of unprotected sex during youth relationships, itself a cause of the teen pregnancy at the heart of the song.

In our second interview, Moorie reflected on the value of this exercise in helping her realize that “teen pregnancy is actually more important than most of the topics we had. We had terrorism. You can’t fix terrorism. How you going to do that?” Moorie found that teen

pregnancy, on the other hand, seemed to have more relevant and relatable causes. As did her classmates, Moorie was able to quickly deconstruct the song and locate specific causes, based on her previous knowledge of sexual relationships and peer pressure. She shared, “I think of abortion, and teens, we are teens. It's easier. We're the same age. We kind of have the same mindset, so we know more of it. Instead of someone who's older or elderly.” Moorie believed that she and her classmates would understand the pressures and challenges of being a teen, and therefore be better prepared to align their efforts with the realities of teen pregnancy. Moorie was claiming the right of teens to define and address the problem on their terms. Teens are most impacted by teen pregnancy, so they should be the ones taking a central role in addressing teen pregnancy. For Moorie, the people on the periphery should be “someone who’s older or elderly” rather than youth like herself.

Nino echoed Moorie’s sentiments. He was more open to the role that adults, particularly in the school, could play in helping to address a uniquely teenage issue, but he still believed that the efforts of his peers should be central:

> At the school, they teach us the importance of abstinence and using condoms, and the risks and stuff. So they’re really informative about that, and I think that's important. And I mean I take it into consideration, but like I said, a lot of people just don't do it or don't listen. So we're the target audience basically, so we know where people are coming from more than just a couple of grown-ups who are trying to give us advice. We the target audience needs to make the difference.

Both students believed that adults were interested in addressing teen pregnancy. Nino even described some of the actions that adults were trying to take. But both students also criticized adult action as too removed from the ways teens understand the issue. Moorie believed that her generation views teen pregnancy different than others. Nino believed his peers need information presented in a different way. Both students believed the uniqueness of their

understanding and experience gave them a particular claim to be the ones leading efforts to address the issue. These students echoed sentiments from the analysis of *99 Problems*, that those impacted by the issue should also be those most responsible for addressing the issue. They should not have to wait for others to take action.

Later in the interview with Moorie, we returned to the notion that her class was well positioned to deal with teen pregnancy. Moorie continued to focus on the central component of identity, that she and her classmates were insiders to the locus of the issue:

> I'm a student, and I always have adults who tell you 'I was a teenager once before, I went through it' and I'm always thinking my head 'no, this generation is different. We are exposed to different things. You don't, and people your age [referring to me; early 30s], you haven't even been exposed to the Internet. You been a teen, but it's not the same.' You had been a teen, but back in your days [referring to me again] you didn't have teen pregnancies. I'm sure if you did it was one in a million, and if it was a pregnant teen that would've been like a crazy thing. That would've been something really serious. For us it's not.

Moorie was inaccurate in her estimates of teen pregnancy rates, but more important than her statistics at this stage in the process was the impetus behind them. Moorie unapologetically and unequivocally rejected the notion that adults should be central during discussions of teen pregnancy. Her identity as a young person inherently places her at the center while also forcing others to the periphery.

Over the next two weeks, students brought in, analyzed, and discussed local and national statistics on teen pregnancy. Moorie learned relevant facts, including that teen pregnancy has always been an issue, but maintained her stance regarding who should address the issue. They used the research to build meaning and gain a better understanding of the topic. By the end of the 12th session stakeholders chose to focus on pressures leading teen girls to engage in behaviors

that could lead to pregnancy. They identified low self-esteem and immaturity as key root causes of many teen pregnancies, exactly what they began with during the analysis of *Lost Ones*. The students' primary goal became boosting teenage girls' self esteem through education and support networks. The class laid out a plan for an awareness program at their school to give teens more information about why and how to overcome peer pressure. They generated:

- a social media site (Empower Yourself: Take the Journey);
- a petition in support of after school programs to raise awareness about teen pregnancy;
- an essay to be shared in the school newsletter and sent to local newspapers; and,
- plans for a public meeting at the school, set for some time in the future.

As DC Grace put it, "when we said 'teen pregnancy' we weren't saying we'll get rid of every pregnant teenager in America." The class wanted to increase or enhance opportunities for people living in the immediate area to learn about teen pregnancy and pregnancy prevention. For example, the petition circulated throughout the school read:

> Some teens are left unsupervised, have too much free time, suffer from low self esteem, or may experience peer pressure. We are proposing to help prevent teen pregnancy by creating programs that will focus on sex education, STDs, self esteem, and peer pressure. Please sign below to show your support for this proposal!

The class wanted to target teens directly and promote increased awareness about the issue. Through that awareness the class described sharing specific strategies that teens could use when faced with situations that might result in a pregnancy. Their ideas gained traction with administration. Following one observation, administrator Alana shared that "I think that what they're interested in is very real and real to them. I also think that a lot of the solutions they came up with are doable for us." Alana was open to the role that Brooklyn High could play in facilitating student goals:

> Because this is what I'd hoped, that they're actually getting involved in making a change and realizing what influence they do have. That's why would also like to see them put something in place at the school, and then give them some validation. I think some of them have some good ideas

The chosen approach was similar to what Jay-Z describes in *99 Problems*. The song does not include Jay-Z's efforts to eradicate racism, but instead focuses on how Jay-Z used his knowledge and awareness to support himself in a difficult circumstance. This classroom adopted a similar goal, seeking to provide knowledge and strategies for teenage girls to use should they be in a difficult circumstance that could result in their becoming pregnant.

By our third interview, Nino internalized this approach. He described the positive associations he had from the experience, and projected those into other possible areas of action:

> I expect to influence others or persuade others. I think we're doing a good job here. And I think it will be influencing to others, to hear from us. There is a solution to almost everything. We can work on other things like bullying obviously and gang violence. But overall I think we need to further address teen pregnancy. To carry out the ideas that we showed the [Civics Day] judges. If we really take our time and perfect it, then we can be successful.

Nino and his classmates claimed a responsibility to lead efforts addressing teen pregnancy. It was not only that their efforts to address teen pregnancy would be originating from teens, and therefore more likely to be aligned with the target audience. The efforts were also meaningfully tied their efforts to the key causes of the issue. Nino saw meaning and alignment in their efforts.

Nino acknowledged that his community still faced many problems. Although he still believed that every one of the issues could be solved, he was not claiming to take them on all at once or on his own. Nino wanted to press on with the progress he and his classmates made on

their focus issue. After he checks "teen pregnancy" off his list, we can picture Nino moving on to another problem in his sphere of neighborhood influence.

Examining the two songs helped students consider the role that specific actions people can take when faced with similarly challenging circumstances. Students made clear claims to their voices and ideas being the most legitimate element of discourse around the issue. This prompted students to claim the right to put their understanding into action in the school and the surrounding community.

Identifying Connections to an Abstract Issue: Excerpt from Brooklyn High 2

This example begins in the seventh session of the second Brooklyn High class. Students were asked to bring in a piece of research related to college affordability.[12] This would help build meaning about the issue generally, as the class had not specified any goals or actions for addressing the issue. Research and evidence focused on unsustainable tuition hikes, an issue that interested students but also seemed too broad for students to meaningfully address. The first example captures the moment at which the class began to determine specific actions. Stakeholders build on a sense of support within the school to suggest measured actions to address manifestations of the focus issue within the school. The primary plan involved reallocating existing resources in ways that better aligned with how students make sense of abstract college preparation programs.

Students' early research identified government support and college curricula changes as key causes of unsustainable tuition increases. This might suggest that successful action would

[12] Table 5-1 lists this class's focus issue as "college awareness;" however, at this point in the semester students still defined their issue as "college affordability." They specifically focused on the cost of college and possible ways to reduce or offset costs. The focus issue shifted to college awareness during this seventh session. This was an important move because it more accurately represented their interest (knowing about college) and narrowed the issue to make it more manageable.

target government or academic leaders. Students doubted that elected officials could—or would—do anything to help people who struggled to pay for college. Like the students in Manhattan High and Bronx High I examine later, these Brooklyn High students doubted that "those in power" cared anything about who might be marginalized by their actions or the interests of those already marginalized, as long as money was to be made. They described a disconnect between the interests of those "with the power" and those "trying to get somewhere."

Those in power included universities, university leaders, and testing companies. Those trying to get somewhere were these students and their peers. Affordability was only a concern of those trying to pay. Students placed themselves on the periphery of the issue. They were interested in college but as high school students were not members of that community, much less the community of college presidents. Having dismissed "persuading officials" the discussion focused on exploring an accessible community where they could expect more support and control. Exchanges like the following typified how the class searched for points of contact with the issue, a locus where students could target their efforts. They continued by considering whether the students shared responsibility for the issue.

> DC Naya: Thinking about making people aware, maybe we make them aware of how money is being distributed. That could be a really good thing to talk about.
> Student 1: I remember watching the news one time, and the statistics said that students now actually study less, and that many kids are not even graduating high school so they can't get in. So maybe that makes college harder, and we can't blame the government or whatever, because so many students dropped out or didn't go to class, and maybe that isn't fair to the rest who do work hard and want to succeed.
> Student 2: Especially if college was more affordable then kids would think they have a chance of getting in because they could afford it and not be putting themselves down because they think they can't afford it.

> Student 3: But it's not fair for kids that come into high school and they want to get into college and they work and they get scholarships, but if you come to school and just mess around for the first three years, then why should you get a scholarship or get help?

According to these students, college is a privilege or opportunity, something to be worked at and earned— "if you…just mess around for the first three years, then why should you get a scholarship or get help?" From this standpoint they are able to consider how individuals like themselves are also implicated in the issue, but in a measured way that does not blame apathetic or unprepared teenagers alone. They considered whether they and their peers identified as college-bound. The students knew they were not apathetic, but may have been unprepared. This is an important distinction between ignorance—the lack of information—and inability. Access to college remains a privilege, but one that many students are capable of reaching. Students would need more or better opportunities to make meaning about the college process.

> Student 4: But to add on to people not jerking around for the first three years, I think they just lack knowledge. Like, people don't understand how difficult it is to go to college. When I was a freshman, I didn't know about college, I'm just guessing and I'm still learning, and I'm a senior.
> Student 5: Yeah, I just learned this year how difficult it is.
> DC Naya: And that makes it really hard, because now you're a senior and it almost feels too late. So that could be one thing that we think of in our action plan is providing more information to high school students earlier on.
> Teacher Cara: What about freshman orientation?

DC Naya and teacher Cara offer quick comments that do not steer the conversation but rather help collect the ideas being shared. Like a good facilitator, DC Naya has offered a summary of recent points. As a current college student she surely remembers the pressures and uncertainty involved in the college application process. She is an insider to the community that

students want to join. But Naya does not share those here, instead choosing to focus on what the students are talking about. She makes student leadership an important component of the process, demonstrating that students are valued voices in these classroom decisions. The students are encouraged and enabled to assume more central roles. This is a beginning of legitimate peripheral participation.

In our second interview, shortly after this session, teacher Cara reflected on the importance of students having that control:

> The students have choices to make. So I think giving the students choices, rather than saying "you're going to work on this project and that's that," and really voting, and picking it. I think having them participate and control things is huge.

Cara's views built on her belief, introduced in chapter four, that she did not know what was most important or best for her students. Those decisions, based on students' personal experiences, their own identities, and how they understood the world, were best left to the students. From this belief, Cara was inclined to share ideas in class—she confessed that she "couldn't help it"—but was comfortable with students disagreeing with her. The students recognized that relationship, which enabled them to disagree without disrespect or confrontation.

Teacher Cara talked with me about her experiences working freshman orientation. She was familiar with the presentations the school puts on. Perhaps she was suggesting a particular avenue she wants students to follow, but the class did not treat Cara's comment as such. This class of seniors doubted freshmen orientation could be an effective experience, regardless of its format. All of these students had attended orientation and/or counseling events, but still described themselves as "just guessing." The presentations were clearly not memorable, but the class continued to accept some of the responsibility themselves. Students recalled having their attentions pulled by concerns other than college information.

> Student 5: Well there's that, but we need to hear from kids who actually graduate.
> Student 4: Who even listens as a freshman?
> Student 3: That doesn't matter. Let's say they even only told us about it. It's our responsibility as students to take that seriously. Most of us—like I did—we brushed it off and that's our fault and now we're struggling with things seriously since junior year. Junior year is too late
> Student 5: But how do we take it serious if we don't know?
> Teacher Cara: Teachers get a lot of "you need to push the students" but at the same time students need to learn responsibility as well and that's a huge thing. So what you're talking about with college and getting good grades and scholarships, maybe that needs to be drilled in from 8th grade or from a very young age. Because if you start from senior year, I have students coming up to me saying I don't know how to apply for college and that's two weeks away or even a week away and that is scary.

Interestingly, teacher Cara has continued to focus on existing processes. She is simply trying to shift the timeline earlier. If students do not listen in ninth grade, perhaps they will in eighth grade; at minimum that increases their exposure to college information. The teacher, representing age and those in charge, wants to extend current practices—perhaps with limited augmentation. Students, representing youth and those "being served" without having a voice, want to thoroughly change a system they effectively believe is broken. It is important to note that they feel it is *broken*, not actively or deliberately set against them. As I examine later, these students' counterparts in the Bronx and Manhattan maintained their belief that society was set against them, marked by such claims as "People in government aren't trying to care about us" (Bronx student) or "Mayor Bloomberg hates black people" (Manhattan student).

These Brooklyn students ascribed different meaning to their issue: it persists in part because of poor alignment between existing efforts and student interests, not any willful conspiracy. Students could do this because they focused on their issue as embodied within their

particular school, where they felt supported by teachers and administrators whose interests aligned with their own, specifically graduating high school and attending college.

Students were beginning not just to engage in but also describe a process of legitimate peripheral participation. They remembered their own experiences as novice members in the school community. As 9th graders these students did not know the practices valued in high school. They could not demonstrate competence in high school and certainly did not feel capable of navigating a process of college applications. In desiring a more useful orientation process, stakeholders in this class wanted a more efficient means of integrating new members into important aspects of the school community, such as college preparation. Stakeholders wanted to provide opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation.

> Student 6: But one thing is that teachers when they talk about college they never mention it as something to look forward to or something you should prepare yourself for. Like if you're slacking off the first thing they say is "oh, you think a college teacher is gonna take that?"
> Student 5: Yeah all the time
> Teacher Cara: So you think I need to talk more positively about it, like, saying "you should be so excited for it," rather than "wait till you get to college, that won't cut it"
> Student 5: Exactly
> Student 2: That [talking positively about college] would be nice
> Student 4: But that still doesn't put it on us
> Student 3: [laughing] Man, it's never the kid's fault [class laughs]
> Student 4: Why do we always put it on the adults?
> DC Naya: This is great, so let's circle back and try to figure out what we can do to get this out in the open more. Maybe the most useful thing isn't just to drill it into freshmen, but there has to be a more effective way, it can't just be "oh you should have listened when you were freshmen, too bad."

Again, DC Naya plays facilitator. The crux of the discussion about what action to take has shifted towards helping students build a positive identity with respect to college and their potential to succeed in college. This stemmed from the quick acceptance that students and teachers bear responsibility for the issue. Naya offers a recap of the main discussion points—students need more information, but increasing the current strategy is not viable—while also encouraging the conversation forward. She does not suggest what the "more effective" way might be. That decision rests with students.

> Student 6: I think we should tell them [freshmen and sophomores] how hard it is to get into college. Because if you tell somebody how hard it is to get in, that will probably motivate them to do better in school, rather than just saying you're going to go to college and do that and fail when you end up saying well why am I gonna want to go and fail?
> Student 7: I think, and I'm not sure about specifics, but I feel like once a month they should take us out of a certain class, like an elective or something and put us in a college prep class, like that week we can learn more about colleges, look at colleges, do scholarships and stuff
> Student 2: Yeah
> Student 5: Love that idea
> Student 1: And that's another thing too is knowing
> Student 6: Just learning about it
> Student 4: Yeah, I don't know anything about scholarships
> Student 9: There's a lot of scholarships out there but you have to find them. Like if there was a scholarship for skaters and I'm a skater so that piques my interest because that gets me something I can do that I know I'm capable of doing. And even if it's not a huge thing that will take care of everything, it's still something and that is something. So we should be aware of grants and scholarships that is out there and on top of that it should be something to pique our interest

The discussion kept returning to students' responsibility for the issue—that students needed to take college preparation seriously. Acknowledging their responsibility for the issue does two things. First, it accepts that there are efforts being made to educate students about their college options. The class immediately considered ways to revise those efforts for better alignment between what the school provides and what the students need. Realignment seems a more manageable task than generating entirely new programs, particularly within the school context and timeline. College preparation, after all, is part of what high school is for.

This is an important shift towards considering how the locus of the issue can be revised to better account for the student deficiencies, and how that shift might alter student understanding of their relationship to college; exactly what Torney-Purta et al (2010) mean by "meaning." Students were unprepared for college not because college is too hard or because students don't care, but because they lack procedural knowledge about the college application process. Without that knowledge they had not internalized college as a part of who they could be. This class was suggesting how providing that knowledge could bring about a positive association with college based on identifying themselves as collegiate. In our second interview Erin called it "hard work. It's more than the regular learning, because the ideas you had, you had to be realistic, you had to make sure your plans worked out and you helped someone." Going through the college application process meant these students were aware of what services were available in school, how those were effective or could be improved, and more importantly what they wanted from the process. Students possessed working knowledge of available resources; more importantly, they possessed insider knowledge of how those resources have been received.

Second, acknowledging student responsibility for the issue suggests that students, too, are agented actors in that community. If at least part of the issue stems from students (e.g., they are

inattentive), then at least part of the solution can come from students as well. They do not need to remain on the periphery, and can assume greater roles to help the community reach at least this goal. The students acknowledge that they have and make choices in their school with respect to college preparations. This class has recognized that they can take better care in those actions within that context. Having recognized that potential action, they considered future potential actions in the same context.

The class next turned to options for addressing college affordability in different ways. They identified the other side of the supply/demand equation and began thinking about increasing the money available to students through scholarships. Realizing that scholarship money was already available, students also identified *knowing about scholarships* and other college application procedures as a feasible way to address college affordability. Teacher Cara, who we know was already interested in hearing things from her students' point of view, was immediately open to the idea of restructuring college guidance in the school. She also believed that the school was open to student leadership, particularly in terms of ways to reach students.

Over two weeks the class finalized an outline of actions to address college awareness. Their root cause still concerned resource distribution relative to increasing tuition. But rather than trying to generate new resources or alter the way colleges apportioned funding they would seek greater awareness of, access to, and utilization of existing resources within their school.

Over the next four sessions this class defined a multifaceted approach involving:

- Creating and hosting a program of consistent, bi-monthly meetings targeting students in different grades. This would replace the existing "school assembly" type meetings;
- Revised college counseling sessions using matriculated students and recent graduates to promote college preparation and the value of college;
- Updating the college counseling website and poster boards focused on graduation requirements and scholarship information;
- Establishing a program for teacher volunteers to help with college and scholarship application documents [Cara was the first volunteer]; and,

- Initiating an outreach program to solicit community members and businesses as possible sponsors for scholarships that might defray application or attendance costs.

The list offered beneficial redundancy for students and the overall effort. Students could find a segment that genuinely interested them, but overall success did not rest with any one component. The list also leveraged an existing school faculty and administration hungry to increase college enrollment but leery of additional expenses.[13] The described actions relied on student leadership and a redistribution of existing resources within the school. Stakeholders tracked their own progress as they continued through the semester. By December, representatives from the class had presented their work to the guidance office and head administrators, and had begun working with the school to revise the overall college guidance process based on these students' suggestions.

The presentation to school administrators emerged after the principal and director of the guidance office observed an early class session. DC Nissa was thrilled at the implicit support their observation demonstrated, and felt it was a key moment for students to show the legitimacy of their ideas:

> The principal, I was excited that he was there, for a couple of reasons. One, I think that it's great that the principal is taking time out of his schedule to come and sit in a class like this, where students are having their opinions heard, so I think that's great. Another reason is, I don't know if you've heard Cara saying, but the two administrators wanted to keep going with the college counselor thing, and I think that is pretty awesome. I think that they saw that the students cared. And kind of like a business, you want to see what your customers are thinking and how your product is doing.

[13] This description likely fits many administrations, and could be applicable to any issue.

The administrators approached this project with an open mind. They wanted to know more about how to meet their students' needs. Class representatives were invited to present in the main conference room. The entire guidance department attended, as did the principal, the associate principal of organization, and the director of school technology (recall that students wanted to alter the school website). Administrators clearly valued what the students had to say, immediately legitimizing their work outside the classroom. Teacher Cara described the students' presentation as "very raw and honest. A lot of what they were saying was tough. There were like 'oh the website is horrible,' or 'you don't get what we want' you know so that was pretty raw, but I think [administrators] took it pretty well."

Jonah was one of the students in the presentation. He recalled the experience in our third interview:

> It was a chance to share what we had done. Not just what we had done, what we thought needed to happen. They had the chance to listen to us and we had the chance to share. It was an info talk. How we're trying to inform a lot of the students here.

Jonah did not see the presentation as the end of their work, but the beginning. Students were claiming what needed to change moving forward in order to address the issue. Jonah's classmate Erin began our final interview more ambivalent towards the experience. She did not participate in the presentation to administrators, but did help prepare for it: "It was stressful in a way, but we got the job done. It's like a big load off our shoulders to be done working on it." Erin was not sure whether their efforts would be picked up by the school:

> I mean, hopefully they take our ideas into consideration and they do change how either the guidance counselors work or if we could get more volunteers. Any change could benefit us, but if it stays like this then nobody's going to get the information they need, so even if they just take some of the ideas. Because it's

> really bad right now. They need different opinions because obviously they been hearing the same ones from guidance counselors and stuff, and nothing has changed it. So if they got student opinions, I feel it could matter to them. We're the ones applying for college, the guidance counselors don't have to do that.

Erin was happy that her classmates had been able to raise these issues with the people who made the decisions, in language that she felt would align to their understanding. She was right. Over the following semester the guidance office revised their procedures for scheduling and presenting college preparation talks, following the plan designed in this class.

The examples in this section examined how students located their efforts within a supportive context. Brooklyn High administrators were willing partners in the students' efforts. Teacher Cara exemplified interest and support, acting as a conduit between students and administrators. Those administrators were duly impressed by the seriousness with which students took their efforts, accepting the students as competent members of the school community. Acknowledging student competence served to further legitimize what students already knew: They were no longer on the periphery but could use their understanding to design and promote meaningful actions to guide their community.

Wenger (1998a) provides a typology of five relationships between a community of practice (such as a classroom) and the organization that houses that community of practice (such as a school). The typology begins with *transformative* relationships, which involve the work of one community of practice redefining the approach of an entire organization. No class in this study was able to demonstrate a transformative relationship with their school or any other outside organization. Such an outcome would have been truly remarkable, requiring something like administrators fundamentally reconsidering the core mission of their school or perhaps even education generally.

Wenger's hierarchy next describes *strategic* relationships, where the community of practice is recognized as central to the organization's mission or success. This is the type of relationship that emerged between stakeholders in the second Brooklyn High class and school administrators. The administration already recognized college preparation as an important component of the school mission. Stakeholders' work provided necessary suggestions to improve efforts towards that mission. As such, the school was inclined to be supportive.

The efforts of the first Brooklyn High class probably fall somewhere between the *strategic* relationship and the *legitimized*, or third relationship. A *legitimized* relationship involves a community of practice receiving official sanction. I could not decipher whether school support for stakeholder ideas regarding teen pregnancy were a result of administrators wanting to help reduce teen pregnancy to improve their educational offerings (*strategic*) or because they recognized other value in the effort (*legitimized*). In practice it may not matter, as stakeholders perceived support for their actions.

Theme 2: Overemphasizing Root Causes or Specific Actions

Stakeholders in the Bronx High and first Manhattan High classes struggled to make clear connections between the causes of their focus issues and specific actions they could take towards addressing their issue in meaningful ways. Legitimate peripheral participation involves expanding responsibilities and decision-making within the classroom. As teachers and DCs exerted control over key decisions students found reduced opportunities to refine their participation. Teacher and DC decisions also placed too much or too little emphasis on understanding the root cause of focus issues, based on the values those members brought to the class. A lack of student leadership hampered their ability to articulate how their described actions might address their issues.

In the Bronx, teacher Pablo controlled many decisions, including the choice to target elected officials through a letter campaign. Student participants rejected many of these choices in favor of alternate expressions of success. Students did demonstrate a deeper appreciation of how not to approach civic engagement.

In Manhattan High students never engaged with their issue or the program. Teacher Travis and the DCs took control of choosing the issue and guided students towards actions with little connection to causes or alignment with the locus of their issue. Student participants were ultimately unclear about their success in addressing their focus issues. Stakeholders in both classes disagreed on whether their actions represented competence with respect to the issue.

Focusing on inequality: Example from Bronx High

This example begins in session four at Bronx High. Students were brainstorming a list of potential focus issues. Pablo, who identified himself as a teacher focused on inequality, social justice, and civic action, stressed the importance of consensus at this early stage. He believed that students needed to agree rather than explore diverse ideas. He wanted his class to coalesce around their chosen focus issue, provided that the issue was one that fit with his approach to social justice.

The discussion as students shared issues they perceived in their communities, such as garbage, waste, or "racist public housing." Almost every student in this class (and every other class in this study) identified themselves as minorities at odds with a disinterested or actively obstructionist majority. They had experiences with racism throughout their lives and understood the deep impacts racism can have. Students probed their ideas about racist public housing:

Student 1: It's violent, you can't be there and feel safe.

Pablo: You have an example?

Student 2: Like, I heard about this one where these buildings are dangerous. The mom told the 11-year-old to watch her 3-year-old while she went to lunch. The 3-year-old went into the next door apartment and fell out the window.
Student 3: That's what happens in these places.
Student 4: That doesn't happen with two parents. Man and woman.
Pablo: What?
Student 4: None of this gay marriage stuff. That don't help.
Student 5: Hey, whatever people want to do, they want to do.
Student 4: It's not right, never been right. It's a problem.

Like racism, "gay marriage stuff" is an issue of in/equality. With at least two students disagreeing with one another about the issue, I presume the Bronx High students held multiple positions towards homosexuality or marriage equality; however, that discussion never happened. Pablo immediately removed student 4 into the hall before the student could defend or explain his point. I thought this action sent a clear message to the rest of the class that certain ideas were forbidden in this context. But in our first interview, conducted two days after this event, James, one of the Bronx High students, did not even recall the student being removed from the room, perhaps suggesting the event was not unique. All he remembered was that the class "wanted to find something that was important to a lot of us. That just wasn't something that mattered to many." Regardless of whether James or the other students found the event important, it draws attention to the complexity of the decisions happening and who controlled those decisions.

Pablo was concerned that "maybe the class determines same-sex couples don't deserve rights. That's not something I'm comfortable with." Pablo's reaction was surprising; in our first interview he predicted "social issues, gay marriage, and specifically being in support of gay marriage" would interest students, but reacted negatively when students actually raised the topic.

Pablo later said the "move away from a religious or moral issue" was a group decision, but that was clearly not the case. He overtly limited the discussion about issues, and therefore the ways students could consider possible actions. In a conversation after class, Pablo continued:

> It was a difficult choice. It was either, let this go and maybe we end up somewhere that isn't so good, or jump in and try and keep us going towards a better place. That student, maybe you noticed, gets into it a lot. I can't really ever tell if he means the things he says, or just wants to stir it up some. And that's ok, I want people to stir it up, but I worry about where it could lead us.

One purpose of a program like GC *is* to let things go, to enable students to use their voices to lead and direct decisions that have a real impact on their educational experiences and their communities. By intervening as he did Pablo was directly countermanding qualities of student voice that he claimed to value. This also went against other statements that suggested Pablo *expected* his students to reach that better place, with or without his interference. But for him, "There are topics that are socially active and there aren't. Same sex marriage, if we go against that, that isn't, to me, socially active. That's not something we will consider." The process for Pablo could only go in certain directions, towards certain actions. When he cut off student voice because he was worried about where that voice might lead, Pablo demonstrated unwillingness for students to define the types of issues that they considered or even the space in which those discussions happened.

To be clear, Pablo was guiding the discussions places he felt, from experience, his students wanted and needed to go. He wanted the class to engage deep social inequalities they saw every day. Pablo presumed the class cared most about their own unequal treatment in ways such as economic or educational access.

Assuming that a teacher's values align with their students' values is a dangerous proposition, particularly since one of the purposes of discussion is cultivating diverse knowledge

(Parker, 2006). Civic engagement efforts are more successful when they come from a broad understanding of the issue at hand based in diversity of thought (Levine, 2013). Pablo focused on how he could motivate his students by modeling values he believed were in line with his students' understanding:

> I don't think I stress multiple perspectives. I believe you teach from your passion. And if we want our students to be passionate we have to model that passion. Why should we expect students to give a damn if we can't show that? So I can't present that unbiased blank slate that doesn't exist. I think that's very important. Maybe I don't teach from multiple identities, but I don't teach from the status quo. I don't teach from the textbook.

Pablo generally believed his students' interests opposed the status quo and identified one of his chief goals as helping students recognize and act on that opposition. His stated objective was leveraging his belief that Bronx High students faced and understood systemic challenges because of their ethnicity and SES. Pablo was correct; the class generally cared deeply about economic inequality and access. Following the procedures in the GC curriculum, the class winnowed a list of possible topics to three: child abuse, trash, and teen unemployment. Students had opportunities to 'lobby' for their preferred focus issue in advance of a majority vote. Teen unemployment won with nine votes in favor and no students who "couldn't live with" the choice.

Teen unemployment became the chief academic focus for this class over some five weeks, to the point that students were joking that was all they heard about. The class viewed and discussed films about teen unemployment and how a competitive job market prioritized college education. They examined primary source information such as state and federal job growth bills. They heard reports from other students, such as the University of California student body president, whose video interview Pablo selected because he "was someone these students could relate to." The class looked at economic data and considered the intentions and implications of

increasing the minimum wage. Pablo was happy at the substance of their study. Students felt they were becoming knowledgeable about the roots of teen unemployment.

But there was little connection between the academic component of their study and the implications for how they would engage the topic. Through Pablo's leadership the class focused on the academic study of teen unemployment as representing broad economic inequalities across the United States, but never established a clear vision for how they could do anything about the issue. The topic of *teen* unemployment clearly catered to students' age group and identity, but besides choosing videos featuring minority youth there was no personalization around students' experience. Students did not conduct independent research or share personal anecdotes like some counterparts in other classes. In part this followed teacher Pablo's goal to provide a "rigorous, content-rich curriculum."

One of the worksheets Pablo created to help students examine teen unemployment focused on the learning target "I can identify our root cause and our goal for alleviating teen unemployment." The worksheet opened with a Do Now prompt asking students what they thought was the root cause of teen unemployment. There was a space for students to take notes as they listened to an NPR report on national employment trends, and a graph linking increases in the minimum wage with increases in teen unemployment. Students completed the worksheet through whole class discussion. The consensus during the lesson was that teens were losing jobs to college graduates, and that decreasing the minimum wage would decrease teen unemployment. During their discussion the students still rejected that option, with comments like "That can't be;" "How you gonna pay me less just 'cuz I'm younger;" and, "Not fair" dominating the conversation.

On the reverse of the worksheet, an exit ticket asked, "How should we go about fixing this issue of teenage unemployment? Who should we contact, what should we say?" Included in the lesson about minimum wage laws, this worksheet presumed two things. First, that teen unemployment is something that can be fixed, an oversimplification that ignores the many pervasive and interrelating factors contributing to uneven employment rates.

The second presumption in the worksheet was that contacting someone was the best way of addressing the issue; a decision the class had not yet made. The question of "who should we contact" implied to students that they needed to look outside of themselves in order to address their concerns. This precluded them thinking about what steps students could take for or with themselves. The actions that students considered were necessarily external and focused on government contact, a form of engagement that we know is increasingly unappealing among this population (Dalton, 2009). A sample of written student responses to the questions demonstrates the challenges inherent in these two presumptions:

- We should contact the government. We have to tell them how we don't worry about what drapes to buy like them, we worry about how to get a job.
- By talking to the main people, the government. Then that can help but they not going to listen to us.
- If the government was more involved. We should contact the state and city council.
- Letting people know how badly the economy is going.
- We should protest and contact the government, and try to get the president to hear, we should say that it's unfair and that we will never get experience.

These comments highlight students' struggles to imagine how people in other communities understood the issue. The need for contact to "let people know," including the president, suggests that citizens and elected officials are unaware of the economic conditions

teens face. The lack of consistency regarding even the levels of government to contact suggests students were unaware of who is reasonably positioned to act on economic concerns. We might fairly expect that such necessary content knowledge would come as students continued to investigate the problem (Engle & Ochoa, 1988), but at no point in this activity did students consider which leaders to contact, or even if contacting them was an appealing prospect. When students first identified teen unemployment as an issue, it was just listed as a "community issue." It was rarely clear where the class conceived of teen unemployment as a meaningful problem: in their neighborhood, New York City, or the United States.

Looking to others for help, as the question suggests students must do, is not practical when the two groups have fundamentally different worldviews. If we believe the first student's suggestion that those in government worry about "what drapes to buy" while students and their fellows worry about "how to get a job" we might also believe those in government would have substantially different stances regarding employment generally and the employment prospects of poor minority youth in particular. Statements that the government "can help us but they not going to listen" are at the same time hopeful and fatalistic. There are assumptions made about "how to get a job," specifically that a job might be something provided rather than something earned.

A question lingers regarding *who* is perceived as capable of effective action. There is no sense of what Youniss and Yates (1997) call *agency*, Kahne and Westheimer (2003) call *capacity,* or Marzano and Kendall (2007) call *efficacy,* or my conceptual framework calls *competence*. There is little impression from these comments that students believe in their own ability to alter their conditions, instead casting an amorphous government as the primary providers. Legitimate peripheral participation describes how new members utilize help from

experienced members, but that is not what these stakeholders were describing. Legitimate peripheral participation focuses on how experienced members can help new members learn effective practices so those new members join the group leadership. Student ideas suggest they remained on the periphery, appealing to rather than altering conditions.

Students could have explored the preparation necessary to make themselves attractive candidates for employment, such as training or outreach programs. They could have suggested actions including the creations of community-based work programs, establishing *connections* or *social relatedness* with others (Youniss & Yates, 1997). There was no effort to suggest other avenues. Those suggestions were outside the purview of this and other activities, which immediately cast students as not just an oppressed group, but one needing help from above. Through their responses to this prompt and the discussion that followed, the class identified writing letters to elected officials as their chosen action.

In my third interview with DC Cain, we reviewed that final choice. At my suggestion that the students made a deliberate choice in writing to city council members rather than working for something like vocational training[14] in school, Cain shared that students "didn't actually pick the letter over vocational skills. That was Pablo. He said we should just let them write a letter." Pablo and the DCs "gave them a few officials to choose from," but Cain felt the exercise was generally futile. The more "realistic choice would have been to get the vocational class. That's more directly related, where a letter might get lost in the system, and probably most likely will."

Part of the challenge to identify clear goals involved students' shifting stance towards teen unemployment as a problem. Ginny recalled that early in the semester "everybody was complaining 'no, we want to do unemployment' and now that we're doing it, the people that

[14] The class never mentioned vocational training. Cain's comments that follow were his immediate reaction to my suggestion that vocational skills might have offered another option.

really wanted to do it, they're just like, [tsk] they don't pay no mind to it." The disinterest Ginny described amongst her classmates bordered on resigned apathy, and tended to solidify as the class moved through the curriculum. Some students simply stopped identifying teen unemployment as something that affected them. Ginny recalled her own struggle:

> I used to be into it when we first started doing the unemployment stuff. I didn't have a job. But then the week after we started with it I had the job, and I was like 'just forget about it. I don't need this any more.'

Ginny acknowledged that her own withdrawal, similar to her classmates', was "selfish," but in Ginny's mind, she had already addressed the issue. Ginny was no longer an unemployed teen; she had a new identity and membership in a new community. As important, she now believed she had the knowledge and skill to get a job, and believed that individuals could do it on their own. Unfortunately, she felt no motivation to help others gain the meaning—or other tools such as social connections—to get their own jobs.

James admitted the same "selfish" attitude, saying "I don't want a job now, so it's not an outcome or something that worries me." Students recognized no other fix for teen unemployment other than more teens getting jobs. They believed that the government was positioned to achieve this goal, but also disinterested. Though Ginny and James never voiced this view in class, they felt students should take care of themselves, worrying about their own experiences with un/employment. When one of them secured a job or, as James did, determined they did not need a job, they had in effect fixed the issue for themselves. Ginny and James conceived of teen unemployment in terms of their own job status; it seems probable their classmates did as well.

I prefer to cast Pablo's choice for students to write letters as an academic rather than civic engagement decision. Perhaps the letters were meant to demonstrate student understanding rather than embody some action meant to 'fix' teen unemployment. Viewed this way, Pablo's choice

was consistent with his focus throughout the semester. He wanted letters that showed students' understanding of teen unemployment as one example of broad economic inequality. The letters, for Pablo, were never an arbitrary assignment. Nor did Pablo believe that letters from his students would 'create change' around teen unemployment. The letters were a first, representative act. The distinction Pablo seemed to make between the letters as representative and the letters as final action was lost on the other stakeholders. Having spent so much time and energy exploring the enormity of their issue, stakeholders desired some grand direct action to measure their success.

Ginny and James clearly believed the letters were meant to address the issue, and they articulated clear doubts that any such efforts could produce the desired outcome. For instance, although James suggested that research and reflection had the class "close to finding a solution to teen unemployment" he remained indifferent towards writing a letter. James shared that "I wrote a couple of sentences, I just did the introduction, one body paragraph, and I was like F this." As we talked about his choice to not complete the letter, James questioned "I mean, what's gonna come of that?" Ginny was more direct in her concern about their chosen action. Writing a letter to gain attention for the problem:

> Is what we trying to do but I don't think people are trying to listen. Let's say there's 30 people in my class. They're not going to listen to us 30 because there's a lot of people out there that have unemployment and they don't listen to them.

Student comments initially suggested that elected officials would not listen to the students specifically because they were young or otherwise different. Ginny was now associating that problem with a larger pool of the disenfranchised. Having researched unemployment in class, she now understood that the issue impacted more than the teen population. The students could now associate with a larger movement, but that still did not change the reality that their

chosen method was deemed ineffective. Ginny and James felt so removed from those they were trying to reach that a letter could not adequately bring their experience to bear.

If they really were serious about working for change, Ginny said, “we just need to get out, get talking to people.” James suggested they “have to do something more. Like march down to the mayor's office.” Such a move, he said, “would show that…”

> Ginny: We’re with people.
> James: And motivated to help. Not just us… Everybody.
> Ginny: Everybody. I think when more people work together, not just two people or three, that’s when you show what needs to happen.

Ginny, James, and many of their classmates developed a sense that their efforts could not succeed in the context of this program. They rejected implications that elected officials or other adults would identify with the challenges facing these students and their peers. But rather than resign themselves to apathy or acceptance, the students developed and articulated a clear desire for direct action. Such action would have supported their own identities as passionate but marginalized young adults. Such action would have involved students engaging and aligning their efforts with and within other communities of practice around the city. Interestingly, this is the same description that teacher Pablo used when he talked with me about the class. Unfortunately, the connection between the study of deep social inequalities and the described action was never made clear during class sessions and did not enter into the actual actions students attempted.

Pablo embodied the tense uncertainty of how to frame the GC program. Pablo was clearly committed to a transformational approach, helping his students dive into the endless problems of systemic inequalities. Generating interest in and learning about an issue or action could represent a great success. But the class also believed Pablo was focused on this single letter as the answer

to the swirling uncertainty of teen unemployment. Teacher Cara in Brooklyn, meanwhile, consistently removed herself from class conversations to ensure her students also had space to explore uncertainties about their chosen issues. Teacher Travis in Manhattan regularly chastised students when they broke away from clear and measurable planning. Pablo's approach seemed to occupy both spaces in a way that prevented a clear or engaging roadmap for the class.

Bronx students could not maintain a connection with teen unemployment as an issue they could address. Teacher Pablo's focus on amorphous systemic economics behind teen unemployment helped students build their knowledge base but did nothing for their sense of efficacy. The actions students wished to take never gained legitimate voice. Students could not demonstrate competence as they understood it, because there was no connection between the causes they associated with teen unemployment and their chosen actions.

Focusing on completing some action: Example from Manhattan High 1

In the first Manhattan High class, stakeholders struggled to identify a focus issue that engaged student interest. Using the same methods as the other classrooms in this study, stakeholders had initially selected domestic violence as their focus issue. It was a contentious choice, with one student in the seventh session worrying about all this "extra shit I don't need on my plate. Abuse? How's that helping me with what I need to do? Nobody gonna listen unless I get that degree. Even still there's nothing a dude with a job do about fuckers beating." He was clearly dissatisfied with an issue that he felt could not be addressed in this semester or any time period, particularly because working on this issue took time from whatever more pragmatic experiences he felt might be available. More disturbingly, two other students lodged emotional protests against selecting the issue. Both young women, they had experienced domestic violence. One ended her dissent near tears and yelling, "Uh-uh, no way! Y'all can't make me work on

that!" Those students were outnumbered in a straight majority yes/no vote, and the class selected domestic violence as their focus issue.

Jane was one of the students in favor of working on domestic abuse. She shared, "I don't have experience with it. But I'm interested to learn about it because people experience it every day." She felt the issue was important, but her early understanding was at odds with what was happening in the classroom. She wanted to address domestic abuse through getting people to talk:

> Talking to people about it. Then you have a conference with other kids who are abused, even though I don't know children and people gonna come out and talk. They commonly don't want to talk about the topic, but it's something that they should be able to talk about.

Jane was physically present in a class where these conversations had already proven at best challenging, and at worst impossible. She doubted that such conversations were possible, given the emotional nature of the issue, but she still liked the idea of providing a safe space where those conversations might take place.

Moving forward with the issue fractured the classroom. The decision reinforced student perceptions that they were marginalized outsiders, even within their own classroom. For the two young women the issue was too personal to be treated as an academic problem. A clique of 3-4 students formed around them. This group disengaged physically through repeated absences and mentally by refusing to participate.

Remaining students never coalesced around domestic violence as a shared interest. There was little research into the topic. DCs Paula and Betty devoted at least 10 minutes of each 50-minute session to a review of current events that had no relation to domestic abuse. When research was provided, such as evidence linking domestic violence with pressures like

unemployment, students still rejected the relevance. They continually cast domestic violence as an issue of individual choice. Comments like "How we going to stop it?" and, "Can't be in everybody's house all the time, holding their hand" clearly placed the issue out of student control.

Through other outbursts and a general lack of enthusiasm from even the few students who regularly attended GC sessions,[15] teacher Travis and DCs Paula and Betty became increasingly dissatisfied with student work. The breaking point came following Hurricane Sandy in October 2012, when the class did not meet for three sessions. Many students were absent the first day back. The next class opened with the DCs and teacher Travis berating the students' work.

> DC Paula: The fact is, we can't do all the research for you and then present at Civics Day for you.
> Travis: We're running out of time in the semester, and we need to really get going.
> DC Paula: We have a month left. Betty and I have made an executive decision. We think we should switch topics. Are you guys for it or against it?
> DC Betty: This doesn't mean that family violence is any less important, it just means that we may not have time to achieve what we want given the month we've had and the month we have left.
> DC Paula: But it's time to step up and start doing the work. So what do we think we would want to work on?

Switching topics was initially presented as a choice up for discussion, framed as generating greater student interest, but there was no discussion. Paula broke the intervening silence, "Well, there was just the hurricane, and people might need help. How about that?" Hurricane Sandy was dominating news at the time. The teacher and DCs hoped that the currency

[15] Sessions typically included 8-10 students. I never saw the full roster of 20 students in the room at the same time.

of the issue would better engage student interest. Though they never acknowledged it, perhaps they also felt pressure to work on an issue further removed from students' personal lives to avoid more emotional outbursts. The flipside of such thinking is the potential loss of the emotional connection between students and an important issue.

When the DCs conducted another yes/no vote, four of the eleven students favored changing topics. Seven abstained; none voted to keep going with domestic abuse. Paula and Betty announced the change, then grouped students to work on three components: Where the help is needed, Preparation and what still needs to be done, and Economic standing of the City before and after. Despite the provocative group titles, the class did not examine any of the root causes of natural disasters or their impacts on people. A good discussion and project could have centered on Hurricane Sandy relief, such as the disproportionately negative effects natural disasters have on poor populations. Instead, the class moved directly into questions of what help was needed in this case.

In the remaining time before Civics Day the class continued much as it had before the issue change. Regular attendance was rare. Most sessions required explaining the issue and program to at least one student. DCs Paula and Betty still gave up class time to review current events like the election that Travis was addressing in the regular Participation and Government class. The most activity related to Hurricane Sandy happened on the last two days of the program, when the class prepared their materials for Civics Day. This included building and coloring donation bins and preparing the poster class representative would display at the event.

During the semester of this study, Civics Day was held on a cool December day at the Museum of the American Indian in lower Manhattan. I traveled to the event with teacher Travis, administrator Charles, and the DCs and representative students from Manhattan High. A familiar

sense of disarray was present as we prepared to leave. No one had arranged for a substitute to cover Travis' classes. Few participating students were at the school, and only one student from the first class. Many others forgot their permission slips and were denied the trip.

Travis relaxed as we traveled away from school. He joked with the students, laughing with them at a man dressed in a bright purple three-piece suit during one of the transfers. "Those are our colors. You guys should wear the uniform more often," he said. One of the students laughed, "man, black and white pants and a purple shirt? Makes you look like a walking highlighter." Elvis asked what he did before teaching. Travis shared, "Maybe I shouldn't tell you this, but I worked at Studio 54 back in the 80s." Students laughed, and those who have seen the movie explain the broader plot points.

Even a few minutes on the subway was enough for a substantive change in how Travis and these students interacted. As with many field trips, the act of traveling away from the school altered behaviors and social dynamics. Despite selecting issues prevalent in their immediate communities, stakeholders did not leave their schools as part of GC sessions. Students, teachers, and DCs of course had relevant experiences outside school that they used to understand or guide what happened in school, but those experiences were not shared by the group. Particularly because students were investigating issues that sprang from their own experiences, that lack of connection with outside communities hampered some areas of growth. Students could have helped usher their teachers and DCs into their lived spaces, demonstrating the places that helped give their lives and focus issues meaning. Instead, the different stakeholders were left to guess at what happened to their classmates and how that impacted their civic efforts.

Arriving at the museum, the laughter died down and the uncertainty grew. Students from other classes were dressed in school uniforms, suits and ties, or nice dresses. Manhattan High

students looked like normal, with a collection of jeans and t-shirts. The students looked around, then looked at each other. “Shit, we shoulda dressed up. Didn’t know it was like this,” one of the group said. Surrounded by their supposed peers, they felt out of place. Some markers for competence in this community of practice, like clothes, were different from their school, but the trappings of authority were familiar: metal detectors, security guards, and a lack of freedom. “Just like at school,” I heard one student say.

GC volunteers and staff, wearing bright blue shirts with the logo of the Barclay’s Bank sponsor, checked names and gave directions. Meira Levinson (2012) described a similar situation when her students participated in a mock trial held at a courthouse. Those students had carefully prepared for their visit. Most of the students from Manhattan High had cobbled their presentations together that morning. Now they were realizing that this setting measured competence through a professional academic presentation.

One student represented the first Manhattan High class at Civics Day, a male student I had never seen in class. He stood with DCs Paula and Betty next to the poster his classmates had assembled that morning. Titled, “Helping Those in Need After Hurricane Sandy,” the poster included drafts of a five-question survey and flyer students created, glued to the middle panel. The presentation focused on the plan to give out a survey to gather information about the hurricane from other students.

Survey questions asked general information about the hurricane and hurricane relief:

- Do you know about the Hurricane Sandy that hit New York?
- Did you lose power or have other things happen?
- What do you think people need to recover from a Hurricane?
- How much money does it take to recover from the Hurricane?
- Will you donate to help those in need after Hurricane Sandy?

The flyer opened “If you are interested in helping the cities that were affected by Hurricane Sandy, visit these websites.” The flyer then provided five links to organizations, such

as New York Cares, that were assisting with Hurricane Sandy relief. At the bottom of the flyer students include "Look out for the food and clothes drive boxes!"

Students from the class enthusiastically suggested these actions demonstrated successful engagement with their issue. Recall that on the day this class changed to Hurricane Sandy relief they identified three areas for their work: Where the help is needed, Preparation and what still needs to be done, and Economic standing of the City before and after. Students did work in those areas. As it was written, the survey asked other students where they felt the damage was worst and what kinds of resources were needed to help those impacted, including estimates about the cost. But there was no research that went into preparing those questions. The class did not investigate each area independently to build a stronger understanding of the overall picture. They did not use the survey to plan other efforts; the survey and donation bins emerged simultaneously.

Though she did not attend Civics Day, Jane was optimistic about the work her Manhattan High class had achieved towards addressing Hurricane Sandy relief. From our third interview:

> We gave out a survey with some classes in school and they filled it out. And then we kind of tallied up the results, and saw what most people need, or their opinion about the people who are in the places that are most damaged. We got back at least 40 or something. People were saying that the people who were in the hurricane needed food, shelter, water, toiletries, heat. Stuff they need to survive. People said that it would take like from $10,000 to $50 billion to fix everything.

Jane laughed as she recalled those numbers, recognizing both the uselessness of that range and the futility of raising $50 billion. I never saw the survey besides the poster, and though he was not sure, teacher Travis doubted that it was ever distributed. Neither he nor the students could recall specific questions. I heard conflicting reports from others in the class, and though I have no direct evidence that Jane fabricated her claims, I never saw anything to suggest they

were accurate. Even had the survey been distributed and the results analyzed, the class was asking students in a school whose community was relatively untouched what they thought hurricane victims needed. That information was already well known and widely available, collected directly from those affected. The students' survey would not have gathered any useful information about "helping those in need." There was no research behind the survey, and nothing related to larger issues of natural disaster preparedness or relief.

Like Jane, Quarles was proud of what his class achieved. He did not know about the survey, but focused on plans to collect donations:

> We got boxes, I made flyers for it, and they put that up around the school. And we also put up links around the school for the Hurricane Sandy relief, so that if anybody wanted to help, they could just type in the website and go there. Then we decorated boxes for clothes and food. Two boxes should be downstairs. I'm not sure if anyone put anything in them, but I'm planning on putting clothes and stuff.

Two boxes and a few flyers make an unenthusiastic conclusion for a semester supposedly spent engaging a meaningful issue. As with the surveys, Travis laughed about the collection bins. "I don't even know where the boxes are," he admitted. Jane thought the boxes were likely to be successful, even going so far as to wonder

> How'm I gonna transport all of them once they come to me? Hopefully I'll have a car by graduation…give it all to a charity. Give it to a church. I would tell Travis there's a big thing of cans, maybe have a shopping cart, but what would I do with that? Red Cross probably.

Like most of her class, she showed little sense of the underlying issue or how the chosen actions were relevant.

Establishing a drive could represent participatory citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), but there was a troubling lack of careful thinking or follow through. No one in the school

could *find* the donation bins or specify a time when they donated anything. Jane also implied the class planned to leave the bins up for perhaps six months, until after graduation. The usefulness of any hypothetical December donations would likely have long passed in May.

Focusing on discrete actions like coloring donation bins emphasizes one sort of successful action. The students could not elaborate on the process they used to engage the issue. The class did not question what hurricane relief meant to stakeholders, in their school or neighborhood. They did not seek deeper implications related to natural disasters. They did not look for ways to align their efforts with those in other communities. All of the attention focused on completing some kind of demonstrable action.

They did not discuss efforts to research or understand this issue as representative of issues in other communities. The work seemed to hold little real meaning for them; it was another list of boxes to be checked off (or not) during a class. Travis seemed to recognize these concerns. In our final interview he shared:

> yeah, they looked like they pulled off a good thing. It's kind of a funny thing because I hope it was still beneficial because the kids got a sense of 'wow, this is how you do something, this is how you go above and beyond a little bit'.

Travis wanted to find a deeper meaning in the semester's work, but he struggled to believe his own optimism. Hurricane Sandy relief catered to a very performance-based single-event solution like a donation drive. It was never clear what benefit came for students who thought they had achieved something tangible and meaningful when the evidence suggests they had not. Positive experiences are important, but the basic products created to meet the artificial Civics Day deadline lent a false sense of accomplishment.

In the first Manhattan High class, teacher Travis and the DCs prioritized taking action over selecting an issue that students could engage with and around. Their focus masked the

genuine resentment that formed around the potential study of domestic abuse. Changing focus issues was meant to reignite student interest but this class never demonstrated cohesion around either issue. Like the teacher and DCs, students in this class internalized the action-oriented approach. Students accepted that their actions were meaningful, even without grounding those actions in key causes that would provide that meaning. Students described competence regarding hurricane relief where there probably was none.

The above examples from Bronx and the second Manhattan High class concern what can happen during civic engagement experiences when classroom decisions are inequitable. Teacher and DC control of key decisions captured in these examples ensured that students remained on the periphery of the work and therefore of the issues as well. Stakeholders in these classes remained on the periphery of their issues, never successfully describing alignment between their actions and what was happening in other communities.

Theme 3: Critical Readings of Community De-Legitimize Student Engagement

In the second Manhattan High classroom, stakeholders described clear actions that they related to the root causes of their focus issue, low graduation rates; however, students doubted whether there was interest outside their classroom in addressing the issues they examined. Their distrust extended from the school to the highest levels of local government. Student experiences with other communities served to de-legitimize otherwise legitimate learning and participation efforts within the classroom.

Class discussions and resulting work demonstrate a sharp disconnect between student interests and their understandings of what interested those in power. They began their work with the understanding that relevant individuals and institutions were set against them. It was difficult

for students to consider potential actions because they could not look past such pervasive systemic inequality described as general racism throughout New York City education.

Most students thought low graduation rates were a product of a racist or disinterested city board of education. They invoked evidence of poor teachers, shoddy materials, inefficient scheduling, unaligned curriculum, and punitive testing requirements. The DCs in this class wanted to help students identify their agency and undertake legitimate efforts to address the negative conditions described. Those efforts to generate a positive community of practice within the class and provide opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation were challenged by other student experiences.

Describing peripheral participation, Torney-Purta, Amadeo, and Andolina remind us that "observing others and acquiring a novice's level of skills and then moving to more skilled actions is a way of becoming progressively more involved in a community of practice" (2010, p. 503). This suggests that the GC community of practice should act as a sort of civic apprenticeship. In the examples below, there is little sense that learning can transfer to more skilled actions or greater involvement. The students gain content knowledge and define actions that they think can address their issue, but they believe other communities will not recognize their ability. If we examine Wenger's (1998a) relationships between communities of practice and the official organization, these students are defining their relationship as *unrecognized*.

An unrecognized relationship is the least reflexive relationship between a community of practice and the larger organization. The community of practice is effectively invisible to the larger organization, and may even remain unrecognized by the members of the community. Members of an unrecognized community of practice generally doubt their efficacy within or value to the organization, even as they believe in their own legitimacy within their community of

practice. There is no official support structure in place to enable communication or action between the community of practice and the larger organization. This is the feeling of helplessness or futility the students in this theme describe. They perceive no useful avenue for their potentially valuable knowledge.

Boundaries are an important component of social learning theory, with both positive and negative components (Wenger, 2000). Boundaries serve to delineate the community of practice, enclosing it from the larger organization or other communities. Without the boundary the community could not exist. But the boundary also can prevent the types of coordination or negotiability Wenger believes necessary for effective learning within the organization. That is, boundaries can be so strong that they prevent coordination across the boundary, or they can limit connection to one-way exchanges that "reinforce the boundary rather than bridge it" (Wenger, 2000, p. 234). In these cases of low coordination and negotiability, the boundary segregates the community of practice from other communities or the larger organization. The examples from Manhattan High suggest the prevalence of such a boundary. Even when students collected and shared information as potentially useful artifacts such as petitions, the boundary prevented that information from altering the overall organization in meaningful ways.

The following examples begin in the eighth session, as students tried to identify specific reasons their issue persisted within their school. Stakeholders explored some of the deep inequalities they perceived at the root of their issue. The class alternately identified three distinct communities within their school: Students, teachers, and an administration that embodies education policy. The extent to which students assigned blame for their issue to one or more of those three communities helped determine how students named key factors contributing to their

issue and describe their efforts to address the issue. Frances, one of the two DCs in this class, opened the discussion.

> Frances: If our problem is low graduation rates, we have to figure out what causes the problem before we can work on it. There are lots of root causes of issues and we have to decide which causes we want to focus on.
> Student 1: The Regents. Kids can't pass it.
> Student 2: Teachers don't teach it.
> Student 3: People aren't dedicated, they just quit.
> Student 4: Maybe their parents don't care.
> Student 3: It's the teachers and the students.
> Student 5: Maybe our friends don't care or don't want to study or something and we pick up on that.
> Student 6 (Odell): School is not interesting, this class is not interesting, we don't go on trips, Bloomberg hates back people.

Teacher Travis shrugged at the final comment. He was used to students making what he thought were deliberately provocative comments about race. But the comment, that students don't go on trips and Bloomberg hates black people, is important. The relationship of unequal educational resources with race and ethnicity is well documented. It is also a problem that programs like Generation Citizen claim to address. Rather than curtail this line, DC Frances used it to demonstrate the kind of action-oriented thinking she wanted to pull out from students.

> Frances: Bloomberg hates black people? If that was true, could we do anything?
> Odell: When I get to 18 I won't vote for him.
> Tasha: What about before you're 18?
> Odell: I'm just gonna live my life, enjoy my life, and try to get out of this city.

There are legitimate things to do about disliked elected officials, whether one can vote or not, but those were not explored. More importantly, the class did not explore what it means for the project that students believe their mayor hates them. I have found no clear evidence that

Michael Bloomberg did "hate black people." Regardless, many students did believe that Mayor Bloomberg and other decision makers "hate black people." The students were considering whether their city and state officials might support student action on the Regents. The answer at this early stage seemed a resounding no. There seemed little reason for those students to work within that system, as school-based programs like GC want, to create their change. These students believed their interests were actively ignored.

Odell was actively refusing to participate, not even framing his dissent as wanting change. A classmate echoed Odell, "You're talking about education, but you mean racism. That's that and it's everywhere and what can we do? Nothing. Can't do anything about racism, that's just some people." There were barriers to students in this community of practice either imagining themselves working with other communities or aligning their interests with those of the larger system of education. These barriers precluded efforts to build on other sentiments some students shared in the first GC sessions, that "if you can think it you can do it."

> Tasha pulled the conversation back:
> Interesting. Let's get back to causes. What are more causes of low graduation rates?
> Student 1: What we said. Regents is too hard, the students can't pass, and teachers can't teach.
> Travis: Whoa, whoa, what do you mean the teachers can't teach? You don't always make it easy for us.
> Student 2: Man, don't go blaming us.
> Travis: Well, don't you think some of it should be on you all?
> Student 3: Nah, he's right, people don't take school seriously, like they don't show up.
> Student 2: How about our teachers need more help? Like more teachers and better ones.
> Travis: There you go blaming us again.

Student 2: No, no. I'm saying that you need more help to get better at what you do.

This was a tense exchange, highlighting some of the challenges this class faced. Neither teacher Travis nor the students felt supported in the school. Both groups—teachers and students—felt that they were working against impossible odds. Teachers generally felt hampered by an obstructive administration and apathetic students. Students generally felt underserved by a school system that provided unqualified or disinterested teachers. Even as he claims to not blame teachers, the second student again accuses the current corps of failing at their jobs.

Teacher quality has many of the markers associated with an important civic issue and is currently being recast as a social justice issue, particularly in the U.S. Department of Education (McNeil, 2014). We know that schools serving marginalized, minority, and poor students are more likely to be staffed by young, inexperienced, or otherwise less effective teachers (Nieto, 2013). Travis and several other teachers at Manhattan High had even been let go, ostensibly for quality reasons, before being rehired immediately prior to the school year starting. Many students believed the messy public process was evidence that they were assigned teachers that could not teach effectively as a direct result of official disdain. But in this conversation students also considered what might be lacking in their own actions:

Frances: I heard someone say 'don't take it seriously.' Talk more about that. What do you do instead of school?
Student 7: Jobs.
Student 5: No, there are people that have jobs and still manage.
Tasha: Do you think kids understand the importance of graduating?
Student 3: No, they give up. But people who do have education can't get jobs, so what's the point of doing all that?
Student 8: School is too far and people stop going.

> Student 3: But there's cheap metro, that's not an excuse. You shouldn't have chosen that school in the first place.
> Tasha: So maybe we want to go back and think about test prep stuff. Do you feel like you get enough support?
> Student 6: Hell no, my support is shitty.
> Tasha: If you're having trouble studying for the Regents, do you have support for that?
> Student 6: Hell no. Like in this school we don't get good guidance counselors. All our counselor does is scheduling. I'm just giving one example, but there's more.

Students did consider other causes of low graduation rates in their school besides the teachers, including how their classmates relate to school. But at the most provocative moments (teachers need to get better, our support is shitty) the DCs moved the discussion to other areas, so "things didn't get too far out of hand," Tasha said. "It was always so hard to get their attention, we didn't want to lose it."

Following a series of reductive votes, stakeholders remained attached to Regents testing as the primary cause of low graduation rates in their school and decided to push for increased test prep as their chief action. As we will see, these students found meaning in their work and felt that they developed a deeper understanding of their issue. Those positive feelings were continually tempered by the pervasive sense that their actions were for naught, as administration would never really respond to student suggestions. This was a persuasive belief. One administrator, Charles, seemed dismissive of student suggestions because he felt they were redundant:

> A lot of them think that the Regents is what's holding them back, but the Regents is designed to test what you're supposedly learning in classes. So if you're not getting prepared for the Regents in the actual class, that's a bigger issue than getting some afterschool Regents prep to catch you up. And this year, a lot of students have Regents prep courses on their schedules, so that's giving them more

> time to get Regents prep in their day. But again if you look at the higher achieving schools, they don't necessarily have to do that because the students get what they need within the class.

Comments like these from administration only served to reify student beliefs that their ideas were not taken seriously by those in authority. Charles is correct that graduation is about more than the Regents, and that the Regents is about more than direct test preparation. He is also correct that not all schools serve students who need that kind of support. The students in the second classroom understood these points but believed they could not address the larger questions surrounding testing and graduation requirements. The students did not want to look at what "higher achieving schools" provide because students at those schools come from fundamentally different backgrounds and do not have the same needs as those at Manhattan High. Instead, they wanted to address the most immediate needs of their particular community.

Students identified three specific actions to help address low graduation rates in their school: gathering information about other students' attitudes towards the Regents, presenting a petition to school administrators for increased test preparation, and contacting government officials with their concerns about Regents requirements. Students volunteered for or were assigned to one of those actions. The class hoped their actions would cover more potential ground by addressing the issue at different levels. They wanted to work on specific action within their community of practice (school) while maintaining a connection to the deeper aspects of their issue that reached throughout the city.

By the 12th session a group of students shared a letter they drafted for the Chancellor and Mayor:

> We are very concerned about our graduation rates and we think one of the reasons that cause the failure of our school is insufficient test prep classes. Better prep

> classes will result in higher test scores. Higher test scores will increase the graduation rate.
>
> The teachers of this school is also a cause of the downfall. Teachers act like they don't care about the child's education, so once a student recognizes the nonchalant attitude they too will eventually give up. Teachers should have better ways of grading. This school needs more teachers like [names omitted]. These teachers take initiative on our education. They push us to succeed, their strategies test us on our ability.
>
> We as students would like teachers to have a better curriculum throughout the year. A curriculum that will summarize the regents, strategies, etc. Regents prep 2-3 weeks before the test won't cover the material needed to pass the tests necessary to graduate.

The letter suggests that students were not solely focused on Regents preparation. The letter begins with a strong declaration for more and better test preparation. That mirrors the primary goal the class established for themselves, though it largely ignores the optional and mandated test prep courses already offered. The call for added test prep also runs counter to the letter's conclusion, in which students clearly argued that test prep, in and of itself, is not the answer. Finally, the letter was addressed to the principal and Board of Education. Despite the Board of Education's increased oversight of the school, the Chancellor and Mayor were not responsible for day-to-day instructional decisions like how teachers grade students or the amount of test prep offered.

Despite their claims to care about Regents preparation courses, the real action students were calling for dealt with the type and quality of teachers at Manhattan High. The letter was a call for engaging and innovative courses led by active teachers with high expectations for their students. Though they did not like the Regents, students were not inherently against tests or accountability. In "strategies that test us on our ability," students called for authentic assessments

not tied to modern standardized tests. That is a persuasive argument from these students, but was generally overwhelmed as the students continued with their concern for the Regents.

Some students sent copies of the signed letter to the Chancellor and Mayor in December. There was no response. Students seemed divided on what that meant. Odell was not surprised, reiterating, "It don't matter. I said, there's things we can do and things we can't. This was just one of those things that it didn't matter." Elvis was more optimistic, claiming "I think it was a good thing. We need to tell people what's happening. Maybe next time we can add some more and do it better."

In addition to the letter other groups of students worked on drafting a petition to send around the school. Their petition opened:

> Do you feel prepared for the Regents? This school is in the top five on the Top 25 worst highschools in the city list because of very low Regents scores and graduation rates. We need more instructions towards the Regents. More specialized test prep to help student succeed in subjects they struggle in. For example, the Regents curriculum doesn't match up with the criteria we are being learned.
>
> Overall, we believe that we deserve better prepared teachers and specific information about the Regents.

This petition also opened with a focus on test prep. Students were so conditioned to the (not inaccurate) idea of poor teachers in their school that they ignored the test prep already being offered because it came from the same low-quality teachers. The curriculum as designed and delivered (if there was a distinction) did not engage or prepare students. Such sentiments reflected a prevailing student identity in opposition to the school, its leaders, and its structure. These students also worried about the authenticity of the Regents. Unlike the letter-writing group, they did not explore detailed alternatives. This group did look to generate greater support

from around the school, expanding the action outside this particular classroom. Students circulated the petition around the school at the end of the semester. They gathered dozens of signatures and delivered the documents to their administration. The response that teacher Travis related was no different from what Charles shared above: The school already provided Regents preparation and there was no time or funding for additional efforts.

Two groups worked on surveys, purportedly to gauge what other students at the school thought contributed to low graduation rates. Both surveys dealt exclusively with information about Regents exams. Questions from the surveys[16] included:

- I feel prepared when I take my Regents. (SA; A; DA; SD)
- I have participated in a prep program
- Having preparation for Regents helps me pass
- I prepare for the Regents by taking old exams
- Do I think I will pass the Regents?
- I think I can do better if there was less Regents.
- I feel like my curriculum is not based on the Regents.
- I haven't taken the Regents but I am confident I will do well.
- I feel like my teachers do not know much about the Regents.

Several questions were framed positively, but demonstrate the negative stance of the survey authors. Clearly test preparation became the focus of this survey. Group members wanted to collect information from other students about the Regents. Having information about students' attitudes towards test preparation would help the class make their case that Manhattan High did not offer effective preparation for the exams. I never found evidence that the surveys had been distributed. In final interviews with students and teacher Travis no one knew what had happened to the surveys. Nevertheless, at this point (week 10) students and DCs were please with their progress. Tasha suggested the survey group think about one of the other action items:

Tasha: Maybe you can start a letter to send to somebody about this too

[16] The full edited survey is included as Appendix E.

> Student: Nuh-uh. We done. You said every group has their own thing and we did ours and we done. That group has so many people, let them do it.

DCs hoped a variety of action items—letter, petition, survey—would help students engage in the process, gravitating to the work that interested them most. But because every group had 'their own thing,' it was easier for students to rationalize not participating with others. In any event, group participation was not a strength in Manhattan High. In the second session, a typical request from DC Tasha for a student to read aloud was met with "I will, but they won't listen, they'll just tell me to shut the fuck up." A classmate complied, "Hey, shut the fuck up!" That negative community persisted throughout the semester.

Setting multiple goals may have worked against their ultimate aim of improving graduation rates in their school. The efforts were not always unified, specifically in terms of the emphasis placed on the different components of test prep, curriculum, and teacher attention. The kind of multifaceted action the students planned would have benefited from using the survey to gather information to use when writing the letter and petition. Created at the same time, but in groups that did not communicate with each other, the different elements were more like separate action plans. Both the letter and the petition made claims that the students did not yet have the data to support, beyond the experiences of the few students who regularly attended this class. Even with those numbers, none of the efforts targeted student effort or attendance, despite the prominence of those elements in early conversations. As students continued to stress the barriers in place within the school, they seemed to lose sight of other concrete facets they might have controlled.

In our second interview, I asked Odell why he had stopped working on the project (he eventually stopped coming to GC sessions altogether). "I'm not very positive because after a while you start to lose hope. And you stop trying to do things, you just look after yourself.

There's nothing they can change about it, it's just that people need to handle it." Odell viewed the systemic issues associated with low graduation rates—more than just preparation for the Regents—as beyond his control and as unlikely to change. In lieu of systemic hope, Odell took a highly individualized stance. The next week, Odell shared his feelings with the class as the closing bell rang:

> Odell: I'm graduating. I don't care about low graduation rates. People are dying in Africa, it don't affect me. People are hungry in Russia, it don't affect me. People are getting blown up in Vietnam, it don't affect me. I live in America. Worst country in the world. I care about what I care about. If it don't affect me, I can't say it affects me. …. Is there going to be a Generation Citizen Regents? [A rhetorical question.] Two days out of my week to this and there's no Regents? Y'all make no damn sense in this school.
> Teacher Travis: There is a government/civics participation requirement.
> Odell: Man, fuck Generation Citizen.

Odell raised important concerns that others shared less forcefully. Perhaps Odell wanted to suggest that their time would be better spent preparing for, not talking about preparing for, the Regents. Odell wanted more authentic experiences that would enable students to prepare for the Regents exam as they demonstrated the need for more such preparation. He lacked the language of legitimate peripheral participation, but Odell was claiming that the very act of civic engagement was peripheral to the needs of the students in this school. Odell perceived the most immediate challenge not as civic engagement but as graduating high school. Odell did not help the class prepare the Civics Day presentation.

For Civics Day the class created and presented a poster titled "Hardship of the Schools." The poster included the class survey, a petition, letter to the Chancellor, and various pieces of research. Students also glued on colorful paper with statements of what they learned from the experience. Representative statements included:

- Generation Citizen has taught me that my voice can change a lot about the world. I learned about who I should contact to help me with my idea and who I should take my problems to. They taught me about the right facts to research and the key points to address. I like having this class a lot and I can't wait to learn more.
- Throughout this project, I've learned how to make a survey to find out what people my age think.
- During this project, I've learned the root causes of low graduation rates because of the Regent exams. Also, I've learned how to create a survey.
- What I learned about the Regents is that we have resources but as much as we try we can't change the Regents.

These statements suggest confusion about what students actually achieved. A "voice that can change...the world" suggests students believe their opinions can bring change, but the only action in the first quote involves identifying the person capable of making change, distinct from the student with the idea. Identifying and contacting that decision maker involves research, as implied in the first three quotes. The fourth quote implies that even with researched arguments to decision makers, change—at least of this issue—is unlikely. An element of fatalism or pointlessness pervades the comment. Also recall that "changing the Regents" was not the stated goal for this class. A more accurate description is better distribution of existing resources, similar to how the second Brooklyn High class approached college accessibility and affordability. Perhaps these Manhattan High students believed redistribution efforts could be effective when channeled through decision makers. They were unable to offer that distinction.

These quotes and other artifacts highlight the complexity of how students conceived of their issue. The stated goal was addressing low graduation rates in the school, specifically through increased or improved test preparation. The third quote directly links low graduation rates and Regents exams, but in a simplified version. The Regents exams are not the only—and

possibly not the most pressing—barrier to graduation facing students in Manhattan High. But like the elected officials ("who I should contact") they present a ready target for blame. The fatalistic final statement, that nothing the students tried could successfully ameliorate their concerns about the Regents, suggests that the students may have known this was a red herring.

Many participants framed the experience in binary terms of win/lose and persuade/fail. Part of that view undoubtedly came from Civics Day itself. Judges' rubrics were collected and tallied, and six awards were given in areas like best research and most enthusiasm. Awards were also given for highest overall scores from middle and high school classes. This class did not win an award. DC Tasha thought the students left the museum:

> Like 'we knew we weren't going to win.' They never win. They never win. And that's fine. We knew they weren't going to win. Because they didn't prepare as much as the other classes, and part of that is my and Frances' fault, but they weren't going to win. I mean, you get the sense that they weren't going to win from the very first day. Because half of them don't come to class everyday. And they weren't, they weren't going to get hooked into it early enough that they are going to attend every class and really understand from start to finish what we are trying to do in the way that other classes just have, because they have 97% attendance. And that's just the way it is.

Programs like GC ostensibly exist because it is not "fine" that students like these "never win." Much of the rationale is exactly the kind of motivation that Tasha treated as impossible with this population of students. A program that claims to enable and empower the marginalized instead helped entrench the notion that nothing students could have down would have mattered. The program sold a notion that success and achievement are largely based on recognition from outside communities. In the only extracurricular experience of the semester, in the context of a celebration of civic success, these students lost. Manhattan High students watched as students from three specialized, high achieving schools accepted four of the awards.

Elvis seemed to take the loss as a challenge, stating a commitment to try harder next time. Much of the perceived success came when participants stopped thinking about whether they reached their ultimate goal and instead thought about their development from where they began. Elvis based part of his measurement of success against the novelty of the experience:

> I think the judges liked our project a lot, Travis said we came close. And it was the first time in that event ever, so I think other schools have been doing it for years or months. And we just started now, and we almost made it, almost won, but that's all right. We didn't win anything, but that's all right, we know we need to work on some stuff in our school.

Even as he filtered his experience through the familiar win/lose binary, Elvis reflected on possible hidden benefits. He acknowledged many of the same contextual factors as Tasha and Travis. Elvis chose to see those challenges as points he would overcome with time. Of course, students already knew they needed to work on things in the school, but this experience seemed to be their first effort to address those problems. In that regard, Elvis was able to identify hope, an important element in developing a positive civic identity.

For Elvis, seeing the work that other groups apparently put into their projects was motivating. I wondered what Elvis might have made of the experience prior to his GC semester. His comments echoed Levinson's (2012) description of her students preparing for a mock trial. Levinson knew her civically marginalized middle school students would be out of place in the formal academic and legal setting. She worked hard to prepare her students for exactly what they would face, confident that her students would need to far outperform white, upper class students even to gain the same recognition. Her students took the challenge, and their work paid off. The Manhattan High students had no such rigorous preparation.

Civics Day largely confirmed the limitations stakeholders already believed society placed on them. Travis considered the program as a whole and the context of his classrooms in particular. Continuing his theme of challenging circumstances, Travis shared:

> These students don't have the ability to just have a vision of what this is, and I don't think it was communicated very well by Generation Citizen. They should really work on, especially schools like this, because this program is supposed to be for schools like this, they ought to have a better way to sell the program. Because without the hearts and minds, what you got? And we don't have the hearts of minds of the students and so then they're just going through the motions. And the only element of motivation is me threatening them that this is 40% of their grade.

The combination of deficit thinking and program critique captures another tension involved in this effort at civic engagement. Student interests and abilities can be inherently different. What they can imagine may have no relation with what is possible. Groups of students may lack meaning; context may snuff out efficacy. Efforts in "schools like this" must promote interest without creating unrealistic expectations. Like his students, Travis was not just considering whether the chosen actions were appropriate, but whether stated expectations were appropriate. He hoped it was a valuable experience, but tempered that with the recognition that extrinsic motivation like grades might be the primary driver.[17]

Students largely internalized the success/failure narrative and expected to fall short during their final assessments, in this case Civics Day. This class, after all, identified overly challenging standardized testing as the primary barrier to graduation. Although they "lost" at Civics Day stakeholders from this class did identify certain successes. Travis noted an expanded

[17] Grades may have been the primary motivation for every GC class in New York City; I do not know.

mindset and students described an increased appreciation for learning with and from their peers, such as through the survey. DC Tasha tempered her concerns, noting with joy:

> They wrote things. They wrote things! The petition and the survey and a letter. We got them at least thinking about what they can do, and this sounds cheesy, Generation Citizen stuff, but we got them thinking about what they can do to change things. And maybe that's not within this school, because this school will really no longer exist, but just to be the kind of people who, in their communities, look at things and don't say 'oh that's just the way it is.' I think there's too many of those people, and if even one of them looks at the situation in a different way, and starts looking towards how they can change things, then that goes in the victory column in my opinion.

Consider the stakes of what Tasha describes. Her students attend a school identified as failing, with teachers identified as unsuitable. Her students face the prospect of failing to graduate because they may not pass a Regents exam, or the specter of school closure. Add whatever they face in life outside of school. Still, many of the students in this class worked to better understand and maybe even address an issue in their school—a school that most thought would not exist in the near future.[18]

Working on that project in those conditions might seem hopeless, and Tasha was legitimately thrilled that students kept working and kept writing. Tasha does not seem to think her students would change Regents preparation or graduation rates. The community of practice outside the school was far stronger than the one GC could try to create inside the school. Tasha and Frances were trying to support something substantial but the students were not persuaded. Though even she had no sense of efficacy, she found hope that the students could use the experience to promote their work in the future.

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[18] The school avoided immediate closure and, as of writing, was still operating as described here.

Tasha lessened her focus on tangible actions. Perhaps she was thinking of students like Elvis, who was determined that next time he would do better. Whomever she had in mind, Tasha was among those at the end of the semester who stressed that the end of the semester was perhaps the least important time. What mattered was whether students carried any of the meaning into their communities outside the program.

Examples from the second Manhattan High class relate to the barriers that stakeholders perceived between them and the locus of issues. Students in this class perceived deep divides between what they sought to achieve in their classroom and what was possible in the greater context of New York City education. Efforts to create a supportive and meaningful community of practice within this classroom were insufficient to overcome what students knew of the communities outside their classroom. Even so, this theme captures how students worked against those barriers, spreading their efforts across three different but relevant communities: Their fellow students, school administration, and city government.

Stakeholders in this class doubted that their efforts would be successful, but not for lack of their own knowledge or ability. Despite gains in understanding the interest and a belief that their efforts were appropriate, students perceived a lack of alignment between student interests and those in power at the school and city level. School administrators and the GC curriculum reinforced student perceptions.

Chapter Summary

Ideas of barriers pervaded the data in this study. Stakeholders in all classrooms were adept at providing reasons that issues persisted and reasons that their efforts might not succeed. Barriers were generally based on differences between student identity and the identities of those perceived as in positions of power relative to their issues.

Stakeholders used the language of power in two ways. First, students described those individuals or institutions responsible for maintaining unequal conditions, such as college presidents who increased tuition. Second, students described those in charge of unsuccessful attempts to address the issue, such as adults leading unsuccessful college preparation initiatives. In both cases students perceived their voices as historically peripheral to relevant conversations. Students simultaneously argued that their ways of understanding the issue and their ideas for addressing the issue needed to have a more central space in those conversations. They wanted to address the issues according to their understanding, on their terms.

A distinguishing factor between classrooms was the ability of certain stakeholders to press forward in the face of barriers and demonstrate legitimate peripheral participation. Students, teachers, and DCs tried to identify avenues for action that would circumvent various barriers in meaningful ways. The relative success or failure of those efforts depended on outside experiences, the relationships that were formed within the classrooms, and the particular pedagogical processes used during GC sessions. I discuss these and other lessons from this study in the next chapter.

VI. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter I explain the overall value of this study. This study investigated classroom experiences associated with efforts to address the civic opportunity gap. Findings promote understandings about what happens in such classrooms when teachers integrate civic engagement opportunities, and allow suggestions for how educators might better tailor their efforts to provide meaningful civic engagement experiences.

A main contribution of this study is the application of legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice to civic engagement. No available studies use the lens of legitimate peripheral participation to examine in-school opportunities for civic engagement. Legitimate peripheral participation offers a theoretically and practically sound approach to understanding opportunities for civic engagement, particularly with respect to civically marginalized youth.

In this chapter I discuss three specific points relevant to legitimate peripheral participation that emerged across the three themes in chapter five. First I attend to how communities of practice enabled or disabled meaning making. Second I explore the relationship to marginalization, the opening and closing of gaps, and why and how individual curricular offerings in classes were in/effective in addressing those gaps. Third I examine the role of conceptions and expressions of civic engagement as related to this experience. Following this discussion, I review the implications of this study for educators and programs that would deliver civic engagement opportunities. I conclude with suggestions for further research.

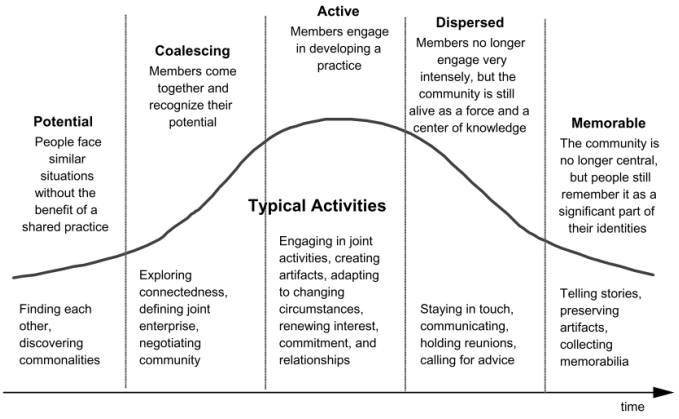
Communities of practice and making meaning during opportunities for civic engagement

In this section I discuss the importance of communities of practice as sites and strategies for meaning making during opportunities for civic engagement. All classes, like any deliberate group of people, are communities of practice. The classes in this particular study were communities of practice before the Generation Citizen program began, after the program ended,

and on the three days each week when the program was not present. But on the class days set aside for civic engagement opportunities, teachers and student implicitly and explicitly invoked new understanding of and approaches to their communities of practice.

Consider the five stages Wenger (1998a) outlines for the development of any community of practice (see Figure 6-1). The five stages allow discussion of how members make meaning in and through a community of practice.

Figure 6-1
Stages of Development of Communities of Practice



Wenger (1998a), p. 3

Wenger uses 'potential' to mean potential rather than kinetic energy. He treats communities of practice as always possible, waiting for the proper group of people. Opportunities for civic engagement seek to instill a sense of potential in students, that their efforts can be effective. Framed as agency or efficacy, that empowerment relies on shared effort within participating classes. Students are told that they will work together to identify, research, and take action on an issue that matters to them. In this study most participants internalized this message quickly, believing that they would be doing something different and important during the semester. These civically marginalized youths generally demonstrated what literature on the

civic opportunity gap suggests: They were interested in working to improve their conditions but previously lacked the opportunities and structures to support that work. Teachers and students required additional supports to promote civic engagement.

In order to move from potential to reality, the community of practice must 'coalesce.' If the group never coalesces, no community of practice is formed and that potential remains unrealized. The first Manhattan High class never coalesced around a shared effort. Bronx High began to coalesce but could not maintain that cohesion throughout the semester. Despite some notable attrition (e.g., Odell), the second Manhattan High and both Brooklyn High classrooms were able to remain connected around their common interests. One of the key distinctions between the classrooms whose stakeholders did and did not coalesce was the role of student leadership. Brooklyn High and the second Manhattan High class featured more prominent and supported student leadership, particularly during key decisions.

Student leadership allowed students to make and share meaning around their issues. Successful communities of practice have their parameters and functions negotiated by all members (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014). Negotiating parameters and functions is part of the process of engagement that initiates legitimate peripheral participation. In this study student leadership of these decisions helped youth define the issues that matter to them, the ways in which they experienced and understood those issues, and what they thought should be done about those issues. Leadership opportunities were necessary for both legitimate peripheral participation and for the creation and maintenance of a supportive community of practice in which that participation could occur.

Once they have coalesced, members become and remain active within their community of practice. This stage of development seems to comprise the meat of opportunities for civic

engagement, containing the actual work that groups do towards increasing their understanding of an issue and defining their efforts to address the issue. This study highlights that being active as a community of practice is not limited to the taking of actions (e.g., sending letters). Legitimate actions also involved stakeholders engaging with issues to make meaning.

Most students gained practical experience working on individual components within their larger project. Many demonstrated gains in key knowledge and skills associated with their issue specifically or civic engagement generally. Those gains seem in keeping with other findings about the benefits of such programs, such as Owen and Riddle's (2015) finding that participation in We the People increases student content knowledge relative to other instruction.

Students in Brooklyn and the second Manhattan High classrooms conducted and shared research about their topic. Teacher Pablo provided his Bronx High students with several weeks of deep academic content regarding teen unemployment. Engaging with their issues as an academic study helped to ground class efforts in realities beyond their own experiences of the issues. Though the students in the first Manhattan High class also felt they developed useful understandings of Hurricane Sandy relief, they were never as engaged in the process as their counterparts in other classrooms, and the meaning they gathered was not legitimate in the send of situated learning theory.

As they develop meaning, members of active communities of practice work to apply that meaning towards specific actions. The GC program prioritizes one type of outward demonstration, including tasking students with sharing their successes at Civics Day. Stakeholders across this study struggled with finding the balance between engaging to understand their issue and working to take or present action towards addressing their issue. They all felt pressures from their limited time and most shared a desire to address issues that resonated

with them. Even students who did not find resonance with their issues wanted to do something before the semester ended.

Communities of practice do not maintain peak action. Wenger calls the end of that action, and the process through which members begin to leave the community of practice, 'dispersal.' This is different than the relationship that a community of practice has with a larger organization (e.g., *transformative* or *unrecognized*). Those relationships are formed during the action stage, and may not persist following dispersal. Dispersal concerns whether and how members of the community of practice may remain in contact, not just with each other, but also as agents still invested in their work. Wenger and others (e.g., Eckert, 2006) do not distinguish between different types of dispersal, but in this study two distinct approaches emerged. Some stakeholders found supports for what I call controlled dispersal. Other stakeholders experienced uncoordinated dispersal. Distinctions in dispersal stemmed from the supports that class efforts received from those in charge of the locus of their issue and stakeholder determination to continue their work in conjunction with or in spite of supports.

In a literal sense, the communities of practice in this study dispersed when the program ended. After winter break, students joined new classes and classrooms. They presumably focused on new competencies for the spring semester. The students in this study were also preparing to enter their final semester of high school and even during the fall semester were often more focused on pragmatic concerns like graduating than any sort of civic engagement. Students had been told that their work was part of the GC program and semester, and often shared a belief that things ended at winter break. This suggests that students either needed to have completed their actions by the end of the semester or needed supports to help them continue the work.

Controlled dispersal refers to supports that stakeholders found for maintaining their meaning and action efforts. Situating their work within the schools seemed to open more avenues for controlled dispersal. Others recognized the work as important and worth maintaining. Brooklyn High provided strong supports to maintain the second classroom's work on college awareness. Included in these were plans from the students to continue working on their efforts through the spring semester. Brooklyn High also offered supports for student work towards teen pregnancy, pledging school space to host a teen pregnancy forum, but this was an offer of access, not a way to maintain the meaning that students generated around their issue. Like all the issues in this study, teen pregnancy was an important issue; however, it was not intimately tied to the school community in the same ways as college awareness.

Manhattan High challenges the notion that situating an issue in the school encourages controlled dispersal. Work to address low graduation rates, test preparation, and teacher quality all strike me as worth maintaining, but the school seemed actively set against controlled dispersal. The administration dismissed student suggestions that test preparation was a legitimate means of addressing their issue and ignored student efforts to open a dialog about their concerns. Lacking any support within their school community, the classroom community of practice dispersed with no central point maintaining their work. This is what I mean by uncontrolled dispersal.

The Bronx High class also experienced uncontrolled dispersal. Students did not seek out a repository for the meaning generated around teen unemployment, an issue that would seem to resonate with many of the students there. The class did not seek efforts within their school, so there was no concern from—or indeed apparent awareness within—the school for what they had done. This community of practice dispersed as students submitted their letters to Pablo.

In addition to the supports for dispersal, some stakeholders held onto or released the meaning they made during the experience. If stakeholders had positive experiences during the semester, felt tied to the issue and work, and felt supported in their efforts, the associated commitment suggested they should continue to engage the issue even after winter break. This approach to dispersal was embodied by Elvis and Nino, two students who clearly felt that their work was just beginning and should continue regardless of whether their school provided the structures to do so. Unfortunately, this study did not include follow-up components that could have examined the extent to which stakeholder claims proved true. Like many studies of civic engagement, I am making some assumptions, projecting stakeholder statements and reactions from schools into the immediate future. I am secure in these assumptions because participant comments directly describe future plans based on ongoing experiences. Lacking longitudinal data, I cannot make such assumptions about whether stakeholders remembered the experiences later.

Wegner uses memorable to refer to the lasting impressions that a community of practice leaves on members or larger institutions. In civic education this would relate to the impressions that participating youth have regarding their ability to engage civically. In this study I did not examine the role of memory following opportunities for civic engagement. I return to the potential value of such examinations when I suggest areas for future research. I now discuss the role that marginalization and civic gaps play in impacting students' experiences in their particular classroom community.

Civically marginalized youth and the barriers of gaps

In this section I discuss how existing real and perceived civic gaps present barriers to civically marginalized youth during civic engagement opportunities. Civically marginalized

youth are those youth on the periphery of traditional civic society. They tend to have and to perceive little connection to the decisions made by powerful individuals or institutions at the center. The civically marginalized youth in this study drew clear distinctions between their identities and experiences and those of government officials. Where literature describes gaps, participants in this study described barriers.

Studies such as those from Mooney and Edwards (2001) suggest that one value of opportunities for civic engagement is to help youth understand and experience power relations across society. The youth in this study needed no such help. Indeed, all stakeholders were aware of inequitable power and resource distribution between and within particular communities. Unlike the diversity of project purposes present in Flanagan and Christenson (2013) stakeholders in these classes consistently sought more equitable resource distribution.

Civic marginalization is in part an outcome of unresponsive leaders, institutions, and systems. Kozol (1990, 2005) and others offer persuasive arguments that decision makers are generally the cause of the educational inequality contributing to civic marginalization. Without reading those works, many students in this study implicitly understood that reality. Told the same plaudits of their "ability to make change" during the semester, many students rejected notions that "those in power" would allow change to happen.

Marginalization inherently depends on establishing barriers or gaps between 'us' and 'them.' The process of othering entrenches barriers between communities. Barriers maintain unequal power and resource distribution. Maintaining barriers is far easier without contact between different communities. Until Civics Day, no classrooms in this study left their rooms to engage with members of other communities. What information came from outside the classroom came from internet research, without the opportunity to converse with those creating the content.

This inherently limited participants' ability to imagine conditions or interests elsewhere and occasionally reinforced civic marginalization by instilling a sense of futility in students.

Certain civic education efforts involve deliberate interactions between students and those who are different than themselves, such as when affluent students have contact with those in need (Reinders & Youniss, 2006). In this study the civically marginalized youth were already those in need. Perhaps these youth needed more opportunities for direct contact with those in power, rather than relying so strongly on their own understandings of gaps and barriers between the groups.

Atkins and Hart (2003) stress the importance of "connection to a community" and awareness of roles within that community towards building civic identity (p. 156). That language is familiar to situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation, but Atkins and Hart only consider civic identity in a single community. They do not ask how individuals who participate in multiple communities navigate connections and roles in those different communities. More importantly, they and others (e.g., Hollander & Burack, 2008) do not ask what happens when individuals perceive barriers between themselves and certain of their communities.

This study suggests that experiences in one community can carry sufficient power to overwhelm experiences in another. This happened in positive and negative ways. Some students realized new roles in a community. Others found familiar barriers inside and outside their school that reinforced their lack of connection. Swaminathan (2005) suggests civic engagement experiences can promote positive connections from students towards the school. This study suggests the positive connection is not a one-way street. Schools must also demonstrate a positive connection towards their students. As discussed above, not all the classrooms or schools in this study provided the structures to support positive connections or dispersal.

Communicative competence describes how youth build on a sense of connection to learn tactics for sharing their opinions with others, including those in other communities (McLeod, Shah, Hess, & Less, 2012). Talking within a community is valuable and helps members of a community engage with each other to make meaning around their interests. But it is less impactful than working to understand how issues are embodied, experienced, or addressed in other communities. Those considerations are what Wenger (1998a) calls imagination. Members of a community of practice must form images of life in other places or times. These images are necessarily stronger with direct contact. Hess (2009), Parker (2003), and Levine (2013) are among those who lament what Levine calls the big sort. Homogenization and isolation within American society promotes polarization and reduces the likelihood of meaningful collaboration between members of different communities. A narrowed worldview reduces the scope or individual's imaginations and abilities to understand or act on complex wicked problems students and teachers described.

Schools often fail to address the ways that minority or poor students understand the world, denying the legitimacy of how those students view their communities (Banks, 2008). Rote memorization and studying laws from a textbook are not conducive to capturing the attentions or interest of students who often do not see themselves represented in political systems (Levinson, 2012). Those traditional processes may even be associated with efforts to maintain inequalities and prevent development of civic identity that encourages active participation (Rubin, 2012). Kozol (2005) argues that the American school system's continuing inequality is in part an outcome of denying meaningful student voice. For schools to promote increased civic engagement among civically marginalized youth, those schools must provide substantially altered experiences. Although programs like GC purport to do just that, participants in this study

varied in the extent to which the recognized civic engagement experiences as substantially altered from the typical approach to instruction.

Like this study, existing research expects that providing one or more of a litany of such experiences will promote civic engagement and help close the various civic gaps. Particular classroom experiences include studying laws, engaging in debates (see especially Kahne & Middaugh, 2008), general group work, active community engagement, and consistent reflection (McIntosh, Berman, & Youniss, 2010). Of those, only group work was consistently present in the classrooms in this study. There was no consensus among teachers whether students should study relevant laws or the history of their issue, that they should engage with other community members to explore the experiences of others who might be impacted by the issue, or engage in formal debates or deliberations about the issue.

Decisions to use or ignore certain strategies fell to teachers and DCs. Communicative competence and legitimate peripheral participation both require the presence of role models (see also Westheimer & Kahne, 2003). Successful programs make explicit the importance of developing supportive communities and building relationships with role models. Competent and supportive experts can help youth navigate the intricacies of social problems and civic institutions. Nieto's recent work (2013) provides further evidence that civically marginalized youth are among those most likely to receive novice teachers. This includes teachers with little experience teaching civic engagement. Indeed, teachers typically partner with GC because their students are associated with the civic opportunity gap or because the teachers themselves are new to civic engagement pedagogies. The DCs are novice instructors—none of the DCs in this study had led a classroom before—and they are poorly positioned to make and implement high-quality

instructional decisions. Both reasons point to a lack of prior experience with exactly the kinds of strategies that are known to be most effective in promoting civic engagement.

Opportunities for civic engagement should help students imagine themselves or their issues with or within different communities. Work within the class was important to promote a sense of community and shared responsibility. It also promoted peer motivation for students to continue with difficult and abstract tasks. But moving from engagement to action also requires interaction with other communities of practice. Imagination allows members in one community to consider and explore experiences and efforts in other communities. 'Imagination' suggests a thought experiment, but situated learning does not provide for meaning making through thought alone. Members should have legitimate and useful contact with others inside and outside their community. The lack or inconsistency of such contact during this semester reinforced many of the barriers familiar to literature on the civic opportunity gap. I now discuss how experiences represent conceptions and expressions of civic engagement.

Conceptions and expressions of civic engagement

In this section I discuss how stakeholders conceived of and expressed the purposes of civic engagement. As noted in chapter two, no consensus definitions of good citizenship or the goals of citizenship exist. In defining citizenship, Leydet (2014) prioritizes the rights and responsibilities of individuals within a particular political community. Stakeholders in this study were more concerned with their rights and responsibilities in relation to other communities. Stakeholders primarily considered what they could—and should—achieve across the barriers between their class and wherever they located their issue. This further complicates ideas of citizenship by suggesting that participants must negotiate between multiple, potentially conflicting, expressions of citizenship.

Checkoway (2011) is among those who argue that engaged citizenship is attractive to those who do not see themselves represented in power structures. Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) support Dalton's (2009) assertions that today's youth, and particular minority youth, prefer expressions of citizenship that follow a model of engaged citizenship. Kawashima-Ginsberg and Kirby (2009) and Callahan and Obenchain (2012) argue that outsider youth are at odds with political socialization.

In particular, this study supports Callahan and Obenchain's finding that marginalized youth may distinguish between the civic and political aspects of engagement. Students in this study generally wanted to organize and make a movement (civic engagement) rather than work through politicians or the established system (political engagement). This is not to say that students did not want to incorporate their movement into the established system; that is exactly what students in Brooklyn and Manhattan High wanted. Rather, those and other students rejected the notion that simply appealing to the established system could have a meaningful impact. Students desired more direct control to ensure that their understanding of issues that impacted them was heard.

Nevertheless, like civic engagement literature (see Levinson, 2012), the GC program stresses "contacting elected officials" and other traditional efforts (Dalton, 2009) as desirable aspects of civic engagement. The privilege assigned to what GC calls *working within the system* presses students to channel their actions through those at the top of whatever system or institution they wish to impact. Four of the five classes I observed identified contacting decision makers at some level as all or part of their action plan. This was a troubling outcome, as duty-based citizenship requires social capital or other associations between individual citizens and the

individuals or institutions in power. Following the discussion of gaps and barriers above, it was clear that stakeholders felt restricted in such associations.

Duty-based citizenship also seems at odds with the generalized civic engagement goal of social change. A more complex, authentic, and useful approach "conceptualizes social change as a bottom-up process of adaptation in which an idea and intervention like a civic engagement program must be adapted and attuned to local culture, priority concerns, history, capacity, and politics" (Campbell-Patton & Patton, 2010, p. 599). Legitimate peripheral participation is enabled when students use their experiences and values, including engaged citizenship, to understand and act.

It is interesting to note that teacher Pablo, the most justice-oriented teacher in this study, also invoked elements of duty-based citizenship. He focused classroom learning on exploring the injustices present in student communities but wanted students to apply that knowledge in ways that Dudley and Gitelson (2002) and Long and Long (1974) have associated with political socialization. The choice to write elected officials clearly aligns with the duty-based citizen and the opposite end of the spectrum from Pablo's stated goals. Teachers Cara and Travis did not espouse Pablo's platform. Indeed, they seemed to generally ignore or omit the broader social nature of their students' issues. But Cara and (at least in the second class) Travis provided more freedom for their students to explore ways that they could initiate action. More akin to engaged citizenship, though still falling short of any true justice-oriented approach, these efforts tended towards legitimate peripheral participation.

Novices (and experts) have difficulty specifying what their purposes are and how they will define success. It often fell to teachers and DCs to specify purposes and success. The general novelty of the experience for everyone involved suggests that goals would either be set too low

or, as it happened, too high. Pedagogies like service learning or other experiential-based civic engagement opportunities typically stress the growth of the student over any goals the student might set for themselves (Felten & Clayton, 2011). Participants may set objectives *within* the experience, but the actual objectives *of* the experience involve "positive effect on student personal development" (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, and Gray, 2001, p. 1) independent of whatever goals participants set. Civic engagement pedagogies cannot rely on novice participants to set realistic goals, much less adhere to those goals as the ultimate measure of success.

Relying solely on novices to set goals limited opportunities for students to move from the periphery of the community and into a more central role, both in terms of examining the issue and planning action. Cook-Sather (2006) notes that student voice is a common term in educational literature. She argues that having voice entails "having presence, power, and agency" (p. 363) within a given context. Those elements closely mirror the conditions of "agency, social relatedness, and political-moral-understanding" that Yates and Youniss (1996, p. 25) argue are necessary for the development of civic identity. Student voice captures a wide range of roles that students can have in shaping curricular and school decisions. Mitra (2004) argues that action is a crucial distinction between approaches to student voice. At minimum, Mitra posits that student voice involves "youth sharing their opinions of problems and potential solutions" within a classroom. A more advanced approach to student voice should "entail young people collaborating with adults to actually address the problems in their schools" (p. 651) as Brooklyn High students did. Of course, Manhattan High students also attempted such collaboration but had their efforts rebuffed.

Civic engagement involves more than measurable change, or what Hollander and Burack (2008) call instrumental outcomes. The true benefit of successful civic engagement comes not

from addressing a single issue but from generating a movement of collective action capable of addressing many issues. Such success involves a mass engagement, as groups of people begin to find their common cause. Traditional success remains important, as it demonstrates that efforts are not in vain, but the shared effort itself and the sense of community it brings can act as the true motivators. This is particularly true if the change agents are novices or, as in the case of this study, marginalized youth who through age, ethnicity, or immigration status have inherent limits on their citizenship.

The particular ways that teachers and students tried to structure communities of practice, the ways marginalized youth perceive the communities in which opportunities for civic engagement occur, and the ways that participants conceived of civic engagement contributed to participant attitudes about the experience. In the next section I consider the implications that these observations have for teachers, programs offering civic engagement experiences, and educational researchers interested in the outcomes of such programs.

Implications

This section addresses the implications of this study for civic engagement in classrooms associated with the civic opportunity gap. It bears repeating that this study involved a small sample, and that suggestions are not necessarily generalizable to other contexts. With that in mind, the primary value of this study involves implications about civic engagement pedagogy and the limits of such pedagogy.

This study includes examples of pedagogy successfully helping students draw out deeper meaning and define meaningful actions through legitimate peripheral participation. This study also includes examples of pedagogy limiting the potential of legitimate peripheral participation. This study also includes examples of the limits of pedagogy when faced with real and perceived

barriers. The ways civic engagement pedagogies support or limit legitimate peripheral participation offer valuable implications for teachers and curricular programs.

Implications for Teachers

In this section I review implications of this study for classroom teachers. The most important implication for teachers is to provide opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation. This requires teachers to balance delivering relevant knowledge and skill while also providing students chances to engage in the work themselves.

Teachers must help students identify points of interest with chosen civic engagement topics. Generating interest and motivation is challenging when students lack formative experiences with the processes involved, particularly deliberation. Marginalized youth, by definition, have not had experiences with this type for work before. It is incumbent on teachers that they help model ways of finding common ground.

Fostering student interest does not ignore the challenges of maintaining interest in a semester-long project. For many students, this was the longest they had worked on a single project. All parties should expect student interest to wax and wane over the course of the semester. One option is for teachers to focus on the aspects of inequality present in civic issues. Inequality was at the heart of every project in this study, and offered a pervasive concept that can be approached from many different directions. Students can find common interests within many topics. Every project chosen in the participating classrooms was broad enough to offer a wide range of entry points. But youth also need consistent opportunities to renew their connection with the issue.

Connecting with the issue is more challenging when the teacher sets limits on what topics can be discussed or what kinds of action considered. The three teachers in this study took

different approaches to their roles in facilitating civic engagement. Successful teachers will push their students to consider accessible instances of their chosen issues. This does not limit student choice in terms of selecting issues or strategies to address those issues, but instead helps students carefully consider the accessibility of those issues and strategies. Students can maintain control of their work even as teachers help guide them towards useful, effective efforts.

Situated learning theory supports the idea that students need what Vygotsky termed the more knowledgeable other. This is a person positioned to assist community members in moving from the periphery to take on a greater role in the community. Lacking someone with expertise, more members remain on the periphery. Teachers can help students identify a more knowledgeable other who can act as a mentor. This could be a member of a relevant community outside the school, perhaps a student relative or someone working with a non-profit. That approach relieves some of the burden from the teacher while also promoting authentic connections across community boundaries. I now focus on suggestions to improve the framework in which those efforts take place—the actual civic engagement program.

Implications for Civic Engagement Programs

In this section I make specific suggestions for improving programs like Generation Citizen, which seek to promote civic engagement of marginalized youth through targeted in-school experiences. Civic engagement instruction is receiving greater attention, as evidenced by the increase in sheer numbers of civic engagement programs, literature, and programs, including consortiums like the Action Civics Collaborative. We would expect that these efforts come in varying degrees of effectiveness. This study of the GC program suggests four particular areas for improvement.

First, the emphasis placed on Civics Day suggests that civic engagement efforts end with the semester. Although curricula may need to maintain a semester model as a practical way to work in the public school system, they can offset the attention the concluding activities receive by structuring in follow-up expectations with participating schools. I expected all student participants would be returning to the same school for the spring semester. That would allow additional work beyond the single semester. Additional activities could take a variety of forms. Mentorship programs could use recent "program graduates" to meet with students engaging the program for the first time. The mentors would provide motivation and leadership in exchange for a continued connection with civic engagement initiatives. Organizations could provide guidance for forming a civic engagement club or hosting civic engagement forums for the entire school, perhaps leveraging some of the same interested community members who volunteer as judges for Civics Day. Such efforts would integrate structures for controlled dispersal and create more avenues for positive relationships between student efforts and relevant organizations.

Second, Generation Citizen is poorly differentiated given what we know about civically marginalized students. This limits reception by participating students. Created by high-achieving students to help intrinsically motivated students achieve measurable aims within a status quo that values particular types of achievement and participation, the curriculum presented a disconnect with the history of civic action by marginalized peoples in the United States, as well as the deep-seated beliefs of many marginalized students that the status quo is actively set against their interests. Part of that disconnect also relates to the skills and abilities of civically marginalized youth. Students in schools associated with the civic opportunity gap are known to have limited experience with critical literacy, conducting and synthesizing research, and have limited background knowledge of American history and politics. The instruction observed was

inconsistently leveled to student abilities, and although teachers should be expected to make changes, the initial curriculum must be better tailored to what we know about the target population. This includes the language of successful action the program uses.

Programs wishing to positively impact this population of students should focus their efforts on developing a carefully structured and rigorous curriculum that integrates what is known about these students' existing knowledge and skill. Specific information on organizing protests or "occupy"-type activities should better engage student interests and may better reflect the realities of a small marginalized population trying to effect awareness and change.

Third, students need more opportunities to track and consider their own experiences during opportunities for civic engagement. The novelty of civic engagement experiences requires that students engage in more consistent and varied forms of reflection. Individual and group reflection would help students track their own growth and attitudes during the experience. Traditional reflections like quick-writes provide one avenue. Others include strategies like ekphrasis (Moorman, 2007), which guides students through non-traditional, often visual, responses to their experiences. Reflection has received more attention in teacher preparation and development literature (see Larrivee, 2000), but student reflections can serve as another means of assessing the outcome of an experience. Such reflections would focus on specific content knowledge, skills, and dispositions students developed through the process. This could help students further identify and lay claim to instances of legitimate peripheral participation.

Fourth, the simple act of leaving the classroom to deliberately explore the immediate community can help reach students who bring varying backgrounds, talents, and ways of knowing the world. Field trips can allow students to demonstrate their skill and competence in another community. Students who may struggle with classroom rules or expectations might read

and navigate the neighborhood in ways that uncover new ways of understanding or approaching an issue. Such experiences can also bring students into contact with different ideas about or approaches for addressing their issue.

Teachers and civic engagement curricular programs have already taken the most important step by determining they should provide such opportunities. In the following section I make suggestions for how researchers might continue to examine those opportunities.

Suggestions for Further Research

In this section I make limited suggestions for future research in the area of school-based civic engagement experiences. The current literature on civic engagement is both robust and growing. Renewed initiatives like the *Civic Mission of Schools* demonstrate ongoing national interest in civic life. New initiatives like the *College, Career, and Civic Life* framework provide enhanced opportunities for researchers to engage questions about civic engagement as teachers and third-party groups seek to integrate the new frameworks into schools. From the results of this dissertation I can make suggestions for future research that concern theoretical grounding and general methodology. I begin with the theory behind civic engagement research.

Situated learning through legitimate peripheral participation provides a useful lens for considering what happens in classrooms where civic engagement opportunities occur. Situated learning calls attention to all members of the classroom community, values their outside experiences, and enables researchers to ask interesting questions about the strategies involved in defining and demonstrating competence. Situated learning also enables examinations of the classroom as a system, rather than treating students and teachers as somehow separated pieces. Further studies utilizing this theory could examine the roles of interacting and overlapping

communities of practice, such as how students transfer experiences with issues from one community into their approaches to engaging the issue in the classroom.

Applying situated learning and communities of practice to civic engagement research is a relatively new enterprise. Torney-Purta, Amadeo, and Andolina (2010) provide a robust framework for conceptualizing civic engagement experiences and conducting research about those experiences, but the framework to this point has not gained widespread traction. Further studies can look to this framework for guidance, particularly as regards the qualities of process involved in civic engagement interventions.

To the extent that growth does occur, it may not appear recognizably for some time. Often it can take distance for the real meaning of an experience to manifest. One important limitation of this study was the lack of longitudinal components. The qualitative investigation offers a deep analysis of immediate classroom experiences, but I did not seek follow-up with participants after the experience. Future research could pair the benefits of deep case-based investigations with a broader longitudinal component. Such studies would offer a more useful understanding of the lasting impact that specific civic engagement experiences have over time.

A final suggestion for future research involves the impact that experiences like this have on teacher practice. As has been reviewed in this dissertation, the specific pedagogies associated with effective civic engagement experiences are well known. Less effort has been put into studies of the reasons teachers choose particular pedagogies in conjunction with how their students experience those decisions. Teachers' thinking about civic engagement experiences offers one area of useful inquiry. There is the potential that teacher experiences with civic engagement curricula can act as the "high-intensity, job-embedded collaborative learning" that doubles as effective professional development (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, &

Orphanos, 2009, p. 4). In this study, teachers did reference shifting attitudes towards providing civic engagement opportunities in their classrooms, and suggested alterations they would make in terms of their own practice. Future studies might consider how teacher attitudes towards civic engagement as pedagogy shift with experience. The improvement of teacher preparation and pedagogy around civic engagement could provide the basis for a robust research agenda.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Initial thoughts:

Physical Description:

Basic Information

Date/Time:	School/Class:	Observation #:

Classroom Methods(note times/durations)

Group Work	Whole Class	Direct Instruction	Teacher/Mentor personal experience
Video	Current Event	Content Driven (History)	Student Personal Experience
Individual Work	Teacher-led	Content Driven (Legal)	Reading/Text
Student Led	Outside Work	Other:	

Observation Notes

Time	Description – focus on stakeholder language, questions, etc	Observer Comments	Initial coding

Reflections:

Audio:

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Teacher semi-structured interview protocol: Before

Teacher name: _____ Context: _____ Date:_____

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me. This is the first of three interviews over the course of the semester. To start, I have some questions about your background

- How long have you been a teacher?
- How long have you been at this school?
- What classes and grade levels do you teach?
- Did you receive formal preparation for those classes?
- Was civic engagement a component of your teacher education?
- Were you involved in your community when you were in high school?
- Have you worked with the Generation Citizen program before?
- Do you live near the school?

Now, I have some questions about you and your students. You are encouraged to hypothesize, but don't feel that you need to guess. I'm as interested in why you think what you do as anything else.

- [If not from NYC]: How does New York City compare to your experience in your hometown?
- [If from NYC]: Have you seen changes in New York City since you were in high school? Please describe them.
- Are you active in the community where you live? If yes, how so? If not, why not?
- Do young people have a voice in their community?
- How does the neighborhood where you live now compare to the neighborhood were the school is?
- What do you know about the school? (prompt: is it a "good" school? Does it get support from the community?)
- Do you think the students are active in their community?
- What do you think the students will care about in their community?
- What do you think other teachers care about in the community?
- Why do you want to work with Generation Citizen?
- What is the main idea you want your students to take away from the experience?

- What do you hope to take away from the experience?
- What does it mean to be a critical citizen?

Teacher semi-structured interview protocol: During

Thank you again for agreeing to talk with me. I have some questions that are similar to what we talked about the first time, but others are based on your experience since our first talk. I'd like to focus on your time in the classroom with Generation Citizen, but if there are outside experiences that you think are relevant, please feel free to share those.

- To start, how has the semester been going?
- What is the project you are working on?
- Why did students pick that issue?
- What do you think about the issue?
- What does the mentor think about the issue?
- Have there been any surprises?
- Describe your interactions during a Generation Citizen lesson. (prompt: What do the students talk about and do? What does the mentor do? What do you do?)
- Can you describe a positive example of students being engaged in the class?
- Can you describe an example when you'd wished something had gone differently?
- What sorts of things have you been doing with the students?
- What sorts of things do you talk about with the mentor?
- Do you talk with other teachers outside the class, about your Generation Citizen experience What do you talk about? Do their experiences seem similar?
- What does it mean to be a critical citizen?

- [Other questions based on observations, artifact collection, etc]

***Why don't you teach this on your own?

Teacher semi-structured interview protocol: After

Thank you again for agreeing to talk with me. This is the last of our scheduled interviews. For the most part, I hope to revisit some topics we've talked about, though we can also talk about new ideas.

- How did the semester go?
- What was the most successful part of your experience?
- What is something you would change about the program to improve your experience?

- What was the final project your class worked on?
- What was your role in the project?
- Were you happy with the outcome? (prompt: what did you like? What did you not like?)
- How did students work on the project? (prompt: was it easy for them? Did they cooperate well?)
- Can you talk a little bit about your mentor? What do you think of him/her? What kind of relationship do you have? (prompt: Do you think he/she was effective with civic topics? Why/not?)
- Talk some about the students in the class.
    - What did they do well?
    - What did they need extra help with?
    - How do you think they changed during this experience?
- How has the mentor changed during this experience?
- How have you changed during the experience?
- How do you feel about teaching this kind of material?
- What does it mean to be a good citizen?

Student structured interview protocol
Student name: _____ Context: _____ Date:_____

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me. This is the first of three interviews over the course of the semester. To start, I have some questions about your background

- How old are you?
- How long have you been at this school?
- What is your favorite class?
- Had you heard of Generation Citizen before this semester?
- Do you live near the school?

Now, I have some questions about you and your friends.

- Are you active in the community where you live?
- Are your friends active in their community?
- Are your teachers active in their community?
- What do your friends care about?
- What do your teachers care about?
- What do you think you will take away from this program?

- What classes are you taking this semester?
- Are you excited for any of those classes in particular? Why?
- What is something you like about social studies?
- What is something you don't like about social studies?
- Have you had a class with this teacher? What do you know about him/her?
- What does it mean to be a critical citizen?
- Tell me about this school. (prompt: Do you like it here? Is it a good school? What kind of things do the teachers focus on?)
- Do you live near the school? How would you describe the neighborhood where you live?
- Are you active in your neighborhood? (prompt: What sorts of things do you do outside of school?)
- Do you talk about those things in school?
- Do you feel like you have a voice in your community? In the school? Why/not?

Student semi-structured interview protocol: During

Student name: _____ Context: _____ Date:_____

Thank you again for agreeing to talk with me. I have some questions that are similar to what we talked about the first time, but others are based on your experience since our first talk. I'd like to focus on your time in the classroom with Generation Citizen, but if there are outside experiences that you think are relevant, please feel free to share those.

- What is the project you're working on?
- How did that project get selected?
- Did you know about the issue before this program?
- Was it talked about in your classes?
- Is that an issue that interests you?
- Why do you think it is important to your classmates?
- What does your teacher think about the issue?
- Describe your interactions during a Generation Citizen lesson. (prompt: What do you and your classmates talk about and do? What does the teacher do? What does the mentor do?)
- How does the project you're working on, or the other work you do in the Generation Citizen lessons come out in other classes, either with this teacher or with another teacher?
- What does it mean to be a good citizen?
- [Other questions based on observations, artifact collection, etc]

Student semi-structured interview protocol: After

Student name: _____ Context: _____ Date:_____

Before we begin, thank you again for agreeing to speak with me. This is the last of our scheduled interviews. For the most part, I hope to revisit some topics we've talked about, though we can also talk about new ideas.

- To get started, can you tell me about your experience this semester with the Generation Citizen program? (prompt: what kind of things did you do or talk about? What did you learn?)
- What was the final project your class worked on?
- What was your role in the project?
- Were you happy with the outcome? (prompt: what did you like? What did you not like?)
- How did your teacher help you with the project?
- Can you talk a little bit about your mentor? What do you think of him/her? What kind of relationship do you have? (prompt: Do you think he/she should become a teacher? Why/not?)
- What do you think about social studies?

Mentor semi-structured interview protocol: Before

Mentor name: _____ Context: _____ Date:_____

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me. This is the first of three interviews over the course of the semester. To start, I have some questions about your background

- How old are you?
- What year are you in college?
- What is your major?
- Where did you go to high school?
- Were you involved in your community when you were in high school?
- Have you led a high school class before?
- Have you worked with the Generation Citizen program before?

Now, I have some questions about you and your students. You are encouraged to hypothesize, but don't feel that you need to guess. I'm as interested in why you think what you do as anything else.

- [If not from NYC]: How does New York City compare to your experience in your hometown?
- [If from NYC]: Have you seen changes in New York City since you were in high school?

Please describe them.

- Are you active in the community where you live? If yes, how so? If not, why not?
- Do young people have a voice in their community?
- How does the neighborhood where you live now compare to the neighborhood were the school is?
- What do you know about the school? (prompt: is it a "good" school? Does it get support from the community?)
- Do you think the students are active in their community?
- What do you think the students will care about?
- What do you think the teachers will care about?
- Why do you want to work with Generation Citizen?
- What is the main idea you want your students to take away from the experience?
- What do you hope to take away from the experience?
- What does it mean to be a good citizen?

Mentor semi-structured interview protocol: During

Mentor name: _____ Context: _____ Date:_____

Thank you again for agreeing to talk with me. I have some questions that are similar to what we talked about the first time, but others are based on your experience since our first talk. I'd like to focus on your time in the classroom with Generation Citizen, but if there are outside experiences that you think are relevant, please feel free to share those.

- To start, how has the semester been going?
- What is the project you are working on?
- Why did students pick that issue?
- What do you think about the issue?
- What does the teacher think about the issue?
- Have there been any surprises?
- Describe your interactions during a Generation Citizen lesson. (prompt: What do the students talk about and do? What does the teacher do? What do you do?)
- Can you describe a positive example of students being engaged in the class?
- Can you describe an example when you'd wished something had gone differently?
- What sorts of things have you been doing with the students?
- What sorts of things do you talk about with the teacher?
- Do you talk with other mentors or teachers outside the class, about your Generation Citizen experience? What do you talk about? Do their experiences seem similar?
- What does it mean to be a good citizen?

- [Other questions based on observations, artifact collection, etc]

Mentor semi-structured interview protocol: After

Mentor name: _____ Context: _____ Date:_____

Thank you again for agreeing to talk with me. This is the last of our scheduled interviews. For the most part, I hope to revisit some topics we've talked about, though we can also talk about new ideas.

- How did the semester go?
- What was the most successful part of your experience?
- What is something you would change about the program to improve your experience?
- What was the final project your class worked on?
- What was your role in the project?
- Were you happy with the outcome? (prompt: what did you like? What did you not like?)
- How did your teacher help you with the project?
- Can you talk a little bit about your teacher? What do you think of him/her? What kind of relationship do you have? (prompt: Do you think he/she was effective with civic topics? Why/not?)
- Talk some about the students in the class.
    - What did they do well?
    - What did they need extra help with?
    - How do you think they changed during this experience?
- How has the teacher changed during this experience?
- How have you changed during the experience?
- How do you feel about being a teacher?
- What does it mean to be a good citizen?

APPENDIX C: LIST OF ISSUES RESULTING FROM INITIAL BRAINSTORM IN BROOKLYN HIGH CLASS 2

School Issues	Community Issues	"Other" Issues
• Bullying (emotional, cyber, physically) • Gang violence • Hall walking • Littering • Too much noise • Smoking in the bathroom • Vandalism (In the bathroom, desks, school walls) • Horrible bathroom, no toilet paper • Cutting • Coming in late • Racism • Transportation • No cell phones (to have!) • Dress code • School lunch • Smaller classrooms • Stereotypes • Robbing • Hygiene/body odor • Jumping or beating someone up • Rudeness (teachers) • Lack of help with school work after/before school • Inadequate nursing • Metal detectors	• Littering • Curbing (not cleaning up after dogs) • Smoking & young kids smoking • Gun control – too many teens have access to guns • Gang violence – children in gangs • Police force – over retaliation • Vandalism/graffiti • Public transportation • Buses/trains delay • Garbage & littering on train • Shoplifting • Teen pregnancy • Abuse/child • Bullying • Trespassing • Domestic violence • Racism • Stereotype – people think things about people because of where they're from how they dress or how they look • Dirty communities • Murders • Drug abuse/drug dealers • Faster police response • Homeless on the street need somewhere to stay • Soup kitchens • Prostitutions	• Vulgar TV shows (TMZ & Jersey Shore) • Video games • Racism • Internet abuse (cyber bullying) • Abortion • Teen pregnancy • Alcohol abuse • Drug abuse/prescription • Relationship abuse • Cleaning bird droppings • Obesity • Child abuse • Gay marriage • Suicide • Drunk driving / texting & driving • Sex offenders • Terrorism

APPENDIX D: CIVICS DAY RUBRIC

GENERATION CITIZEN JUDGE #2 Start with Table #2 and then proceed to Tables #3, #4, and #5

Please grade each table in each category on a score from 0 to 4: 0-No Effort, 1-Minimal, 2-Average, 3-Excellent, 4-Exceptional		[Round 1] Table 2 Focus Issue:	[Round 2] Table 3 Focus Issue:
Category	**Possible Questions**		
UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE: Students engage in critical thinking and research to understand their issue.	• How did you learn about this issue? What information was most important to you? • Who is affected by this issue? What makes it significant?		
GOALS AND PLANNING: Students set a goal and created strategies as a class to address the focus issue at its root cause.	• How does your goal reach the root causes of the problem? • How did you decide upon these strategies? • How does your project create or aim toward long-term change?		
PROJECT TEAMS: Students undertake work in small teams to collaboratively accomplish larger class goals.	• What was challenging about working as a group? Successful? • How do you think working as a group helps strengthen civic action projects?		
TACTICS AND ACTION: Students initiate and take strategic action to engage community members and decision makers to reach their goals.	• How did you undertake work on your tactic(s)? • Were your tactics successful in contributing to the class goal? Why or why not?		
COMMUNICATING THE WORK: Students clearly and confidently articulate their project and process to stakeholders and coalition partners.	• How did you present your message to gain the support of decision-makers and community? • What was the reaction of decision makers or stakeholders who heard about your project?		
REFLECTION: Students engage in reflection throughout the process and connect their GC experiences with future implications and possibilities.	• How would you change your plan if you were going to continue working on your issue in the future? • What will happen with your project after the end of this semester? How will you make sure your impact lasts?		
	TOTAL SCORE: **(Please take a moment to add your totals for each Table)**		

Personal Notes:

APPENDIX E: FINAL SURVEY FROM MANHATTAN HIGH CLASS 2

Survey on the Regents Examinations
Created by [redacted]

Please choose one answer to each of the questions.

1. I think the Regents examinations are very important
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
2. I have participated in a Regents preparation program
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
3. If yes, did you find the information useful?
   a. Yes, very useful.
   b. Somewhat useful
   c. Not particularly useful
   d. Not useful at all.
4. I feel prepared to take my Regents.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
5. I have already failed at least one Regents exam.
   a. Yes
   b. No
6. I feel my curriculum is academically weak?
   a. Yes, very weak
   b. Somewhat weak
   c. Not particularly weak
   d. Not weak at all
7. I often do poorly on standardized exams.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
8. What do you think is the biggest factor in you passing your Regents exams?
   a. My teachers
   b. My own studying
   c. My curriculum
   d. Other (please indicate) ----------_____
9. I feel that the Regents exams should be distributed in another language.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
10. I feel that all grade levels should be eligible to sit for the Regents exams.
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Disagree
    d. Strongly disagree